

# MAKING THE NINE

A·T·DUDLEY





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REFERENCE

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## **MAKING THE NINE**

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Phil did not walk in from the field.—*Page 321.*

*PHILLIPS EXETER SERIES*

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# MAKING THE NINE

BY

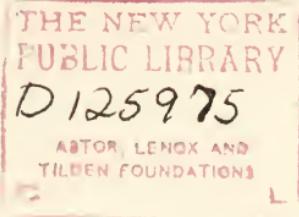
ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY

AUTHOR OF "FOLLOWING THE BALL"

*ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES COPELAND*



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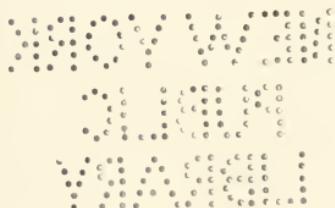


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MAKING THE NINE.



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To

GEORGE ALBERT WENTWORTH

KNOWN TO THE WORLD AS THE AUTHOR OF

A SCORE OF STANDARD TEXT-BOOKS

TO THE ALUMNI OF

THE PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY

AS

*The Great Master of Boys*





## PREFACE

THE cordial welcome given to FOLLOWING THE BALL by boy readers and parents—severe critics both, though from very different stand-points—has led to the writing of this second story, in which baseball has a sufficiently important part to suggest the title.

The author's purpose in each case has been to produce a readable story true to the life of a distinctly American school, true to athletics in their better spirit and character, and teaching—not preaching—a manly and reasonable ideal. If he has not succeeded in this, the failure can certainly not be charged to lack of experience with athletics or school life or the ways of boys.

Hearty acknowledgments for expert advice on the technicalities of baseball training and play are due to Dr. Edward H. Nichols of Boston,

## PREFACE

who, as player, head coach, and graduate adviser, has probably contributed more to Harvard victories on the diamond than any other one man. The play marking the climax of the game described in Chapter XXVI is a historic one, borrowed from a Yale-Harvard contest. Its hero was Mr. George W. Foster, of a champion Harvard nine.

ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY.

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## MAKING THE NINE

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### CHAPTER I

#### AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

“How they do yell! Where’s your patriotism, Phil, to be hanging round in this gloomy crowd when all your friends are howling their heads off outside? Don’t you know Yale won the game? Why aren’t you out there with the rest?”

Philip Poole looked up with a smile, but did not reply.

“He’s comforting the afflicted,” said Dick Melvin, who shared with Poole the ownership of the room. “You don’t want to gloat over us poor Harvardites, do you, Phil? Thank you much for your sympathy.”

“That isn’t the reason,” said the lad, after a

## MAKING THE NINE

pause, with the sober look in his big, wide-open eyes that made him seem serious even when his feelings inclined in the opposite direction. "I just don't see any cause for such a racket. A Yale football victory over Harvard is too ordinary an occurrence to get wild over."

The chorus of hoots and groans that greeted this explanation brought a smile of satisfaction to the boy's face. He was the youngest of the company, only in his second year at Seaton ; the others were mostly seniors. As Melvin's room-mate, however, and in a measure still under the senior's care, Poole was thrown as much with the older students as with his own classmates ; and the intimacy thus developed had served both to sharpen his wits and to give him practice in self-defence.

Melvin himself had not been at Seaton much longer than Phil. He had entered at the beginning of the Middle year, an unknown boy, green, sanguine, eager to win a scholarship and so relieve his father of some of the expense of his schooling. Soon, however, fascinated by football and the glamour of the school athletic world,

## AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

he had failed to subordinate his sport to the real objects of school life. How he made the school eleven and went down with it to defeat ; how he lost his scholarship ; how the care of young Phil, suddenly offered him by the lad's uncle, sobered and steadied him and enabled him to stay in school ; how he and John Curtis fought the long uphill fight to develop a strong team, and finally defeated the rival school,—all this has already been told in another book, and can only be referred to very briefly here. The great game which marked the climax of the struggle was still a recent event.

“ You didn't take it so calmly when Seaton won the victory two weeks ago, and your beloved Dick spent the afternoon kicking the ball over the Hillbury goal-posts,” said Varrell, a tall, quiet boy, with keen, restless eyes that followed the conversation from face to face.

“ That's different,” replied Poole. “ I'm first for Seaton and afterwards for Yale. The college can wait until I get there — and that will be a long time yet,” he added ruefully, “ if what I was told in the algebra class to-day holds true.”

## MAKING THE NINE

The others laughed patronizingly, as befitted those who had "points" to their credit on preliminary certificates, and knew Cæsar and algebra only as outgrown acquaintances—friends they had never been.

"He's playing off," said Todd, suspiciously. "I don't doubt he drew an 'A' on his last examination."

For one member of the group, the conversation was taking an unpleasant turn. John Curtis talked as unwillingly about examinations or entering college as the family of a convict on prison discipline. John had been captain of the football team, a player with a record, already courted by college committees on the lookout for good material for Varsity elevens. The glory of victory still rested full and bright upon him, but neither the adulation of comrades nor his own consciousness of achievement could make up to him for his failure to be recommended for preliminaries at the last college examinations, and his present gloomy outlook.

"Let's see what they're doing out in the

## AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

yard," he said abruptly, lifting his two hundred pounds from a creaking chair.

Bang, bang, bump, bang! went a heavy object down the stairs. Melvin jerked the door open in season to hear a scurry of feet at the end of the corridor, and the slam of two or three doors.

"This thing must stop, do you hear?" he shouted in the direction from which the sound had come.

The corridor was silent. No one answered; no one appeared. Yet behind the cracks of doors ajar were uttered low chucklings that the monitor rather suspected than heard. From a door at the end emerged an innocent head adorned with a green shade.

"Who are you bawling at, anyway? A fellow can't study in this place, however much he tries. First a chump fires a bowling ball downstairs, and then the monitor curdles your blood with his Apache yells. I'd rather hear the ball, a good sight. It isn't so hard on the nerves."

"You tell those fellows to stop that thing right off, or I'll report every one of them."

## MAKING THE NINE

"Tell them yourself!" retorted the green shade; "I'm not their grandmother."

Inside Number 9 the company roared with laughter. "There's no more fun for the poor fellows in this hall since Dick was put over it," said Curtis.

"No, he takes his duties seriously," commented Todd. "What did you do to them, Mr. Monitor," he asked, as the official returned, "put 'em on probation?"

"Warned them," replied Melvin, with good humor undisturbed.

"Who was that you were laboring with?"

"Tompkins."

"What!" cried Curtis, "that wild-looking, shaggy-haired man from Butte, who looks as if he had just escaped from the menagerie?"

"That's the one," replied Dick; "though he isn't as bad as all that. He's a bit freakish, I'll admit."

"Not so much of a freak as he looks," said Todd. "You ought to have seen him open the safe down at Morrison's. They'd lost the combination, and the clerks had been guessing, and

## AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

twisting, and pulling at the knob all the morning. Then this Tompkins happened in and took a try at it. He had the door open in two minutes. Just listened at the lock till he heard the right sound."

"Couldn't have been much of a lock," said Curtis. "Come on; let's see what's doing outside."

The big fellow went whistling downstairs, followed by Todd and Poole. Varrell and Dickinson the runner still remained, the latter too much incapacitated by the sprain he had received in the great game to make any unnecessary movements, the former apparently uninterested. The Harvard sympathizers had rallied, and, making up in numbers what they lacked in righteous cause, were shouting across the yard to the Yale band, drowning cheers of exultation with more vociferous cheers of loyalty.

"The fools!" exclaimed the misanthropic Dickinson.

"Who?" cried Varrell, suddenly roused from reverie.

"Why, those fellows out there wasting their

## MAKING THE NINE

time and strength on something that does not concern them at all."

"Oh!" said Varrell, and sank back again into his chair.

Dickinson and Melvin exchanged a glance of surprise. They knew that at one time Varrell had had serious trouble with his ears, and was still a little deaf; but he got on so well, both in the class room and among the boys, that it seemed hardly possible that he was unable to hear these boisterous shouts outside.

They sat a few minutes longer in silence, listening to the cheers hurled back and forth across the yard. Soon throats grew weary, and the mood changed. The enthusiasts, beginning to be conscious, as they stamped their feet and dug their hands into their pockets, that the November night was really cold, bethought themselves of warm rooms and work still to be done, and scattered to shelter. The scamper of feet was heard on the stairs; good nights were exchanged in the entries and shouted from the windows. Then the natural quiet again prevailed.

## AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

"Dick," said Dickinson at last, "you know that Saville has left school."

"Yes, I have heard so," replied Melvin. "He was your track manager, wasn't he? Who will take his place?"

"You," answered Dickinson, calmly.

Melvin laughed. "I see myself in that job."

"I mean what I say," went on Dickinson. "When I took the captaincy of the track team, it was only on condition that I should have no trouble about business matters. So they appointed Saville. Now that he's gone, I must have another man just as trustworthy."

"That's mere flattery," replied Dick, still jesting. "I'm too old a fish to nibble at that kind of a bait."

Dickinson grew indignant. "I'm not flattering. I know that if you undertake the thing, it will be well done."

"But I don't want it," pleaded Melvin, serious at last. "There are twenty fellows who would be delighted to serve, who would do just as well as I. Besides, I play football, and

## MAKING THE NINE

who ever heard of a football player acting as manager?"

"I played too, didn't I, but that doesn't release me from the captaincy. I'm sure I'd like to get out of the thing as much as you."

"A man who can do a quarter in fifty seconds can't expect to get out of it."

"Say forty!" exclaimed Dickinson, angrily.  
"You may as well."

Dick laughed. There was nothing so certain to arouse Dickinson's ire as the assumption that he was a marvellous runner whose records could be counted on to move in a sliding scale downward with no particular limit in sight. This sensitiveness, due partly to the boy's extreme modesty, partly to his fear of disappointing such high expectations, his comrades had played on to their amusement more than once.

"I think I'll get out altogether," said the runner, gloomily.

"You can't," said Melvin; "the school wouldn't let you."

"Then I'll tell you what I *will* do," Dickinson declared, giving the arm of the chair a blow

## AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

with his fist. "I'll insist that you run the mile again as you did last year."

"No, sir!" said Melvin, and set his lips.

"You'll have to if I insist upon it. You don't play baseball, and you have nothing at all to do in the spring. I can bring so much pressure to bear upon you that you simply can't resist."

To this Melvin made no immediate reply, but quietly pondered.

"What do you think, Wrenn?" said Dickinson, turning to Varrell, who had been a silent witness to the conversation. "Isn't he just the man to hold the confidence of the school? And he couldn't be expected to run if he were manager, could he?"

"Of course not," replied Varrell, promptly.

"Then will you be my assistant and help me collect the money?" demanded Melvin, turning to the last speaker.

But Varrell was not easily caught. "You don't need any assistant," he replied, with a grin. "You're equal to it all yourself. The Athletic Association wouldn't elect me, anyway."

## MAKING THE NINE

"Don't be too sure of that," remarked Dickinson.

The trio parted with the question still unsettled. "That was great generalship," said Dickinson to himself, exultantly, as he limped downstairs. "He's scared as death of the mile run. I guess I'll land him."

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE ICE

As Dickinson foresaw, Melvin yielded to the pressure brought to bear upon him, and resigned himself to the thankless task of managing the track team. The election was held a week after Thanksgiving, arousing but a lukewarm interest. With fine ice on the river, and the Christmas holidays close at hand, few had more than a thought for the distant spring. Even the problems of the baseball season were as yet but lightly mentioned. There was a general optimism in the air that year at Seaton which carried everything before it, like the high tides of confidence which sometimes sweep over the stock-market. It made little difference who were captains or managers; this was Seaton's year; the teams were bound to win. Only a few of the wiser heads — perhaps not all the

## MAKING THE NINE

captains and managers themselves—understood fully the danger of such a mood.

If the task of athletic manager proved to Melvin for the time being a sinecure, another office which was suddenly thrust upon him was quite the opposite. No one knew exactly how the hockey rivalry started, or who were the first to fan it into flame. It was just the kind of contest most likely to arise where boys gather from every part of the country, each loyal to his home and state, and each ready to boast superiority, and defend the boast with tongue and muscle. Dick had hardly been twice on the ice when the hockey players began to pair off into New England and Western teams. By some natural agreement the Hudson River was made the boundary line,—a rather unfair division, as it afterwards proved, for the New Englanders included considerably more than half the skaters. At first the rivalry was general and unorganized; then teams were more carefully picked; and finally, as the victory wavered from East to West in these miscellaneous engagements, and enthusiasm and pugnacious

## ON THE ICE

patriotism spread, the school was sifted for experts, champion teams were chosen, and a day set for a single decisive contest. It was then that Dick found to his surprise that he was appointed captain of the Western team.

Sands, the captain of the school nine, who lived in Chicago, brought him the news.

"How absurd!" cried Dick, aghast. "Why, I'm no hockey player. There must be a dozen fellows better than I."

"They think you'll be the best leader, anyway," returned Sands; "and as there's no one else eligible whom the fellows will follow, you'll just have to take it. When a man handles a football as you did last fall, he's supposed to be capable of anything. Don't try for the nine, please. You can't play ball on a reputation, and I should hate to have to fire you from the squad."

Sands threw himself on the sofa, and waited for an answer.

"There's no danger of that," replied Melvin, unruffled. "I don't play ball. As for the hockey business, I'm quite willing to act as

## MAKING THE NINE

leader, if it's understood that I make no pretensions to being a crack."

He pondered a moment and then went on: "What material is there? Curtis and Toddy don't live in New England. That gives us four solid men for a nucleus."

"You're out there," Sands answered gloomily. "Curtis lives in New York and Todd in Brooklyn, and both are east of the Hudson."

Melvin looked serious. "Then they'll be on the other side. I don't like that. I've stood side by side with John Curtis in so many hard fights that it seems like treachery to play against him. I really don't want to do it."

Sands laughed. "That's you all over. You tackle everything big and little in deadly earnest as if you were fighting the battle of Gettysburg all by yourself. This isn't a Hillbury game; it's a kind of lark."

"Oh, yes, I know all about that kind of a lark. When you begin, it's a joke; before you're through, it's a fight for blood."

"What do you think of my case?" replied Sands. "I have one brother in Yale

## ON THE ICE

and another in Harvard, and both on the teams."

"I've heard of them," said Melvin. "How do they contrive to avoid scrapping?"

"They never discuss college matters at all. When I'm with one, he urges me to go to Yale; when the other gets hold of me, he talks Harvard; when we are all together, they cut the subject."

Dick still meditated. Sands tried another tack.

"The New Englanders are talking big. Curtis says the Greasers will wish they'd stayed on the plains when his team's through with them."

"Did he really say that?" asked Dick, straightening up.

"He did, and Toddy told Marks the Yanks would clean us off the ice so quickly you'd think they'd used Sapolio."

"He must consider us either sandless or mighty green," said Dick.

"And he's more than half right, too," replied Sands, "as far as the greenness is concerned. It's one thing to play with a mob in the old-fash-

## MAKING THE NINE

ioned go-as-you-please way, and quite another to run a regular team of seven, with complicated rules, and lifts and shoots and body checks and passes and on-side and off-side play, and all the tricks of the new game."

"I don't believe he'll find us as simple as we look," replied Melvin, as he opened a drawer and took out a sheet of paper. "I'll take the captaincy, provisionally at any rate; and we'll call out candidates this very afternoon. I'll post the notice as soon as I can write it. See all the fellows you can; tell them the Yanks are crowing, and we'll have a big push and lots of zeal. Do you know any hockey experts on our side of the river?"

"The only crack I've heard of is a fellow named Bosworth, but he's on the other side."

"I'm glad of it," said Melvin; "I don't like him."

In answer to the captain's call a score of enthusiasts gathered on the upper river. Varrell was among them, and Sands, and Burnett, and several heavy men who seemed promising forwards, and a little, wiry, dark-haired fellow

## ON THE ICE

from Minneapolis named Durand, whom Dick immediately picked out as likely to prove a steady player on the second team. The first task was to find who were well used to the game, and who needed special instruction; the second, to set the experienced to coach the inexperienced; the third, to divide the men into squads, set several games going, and watch the work. Finally, the captain chose a trial seven, gave the scrub an extra man, and tried a ten-minute half.

Little Durand and Varrell, who had never impressed his classmates as an athlete, found themselves on the scrub. Varrell took coverpoint and Durand put himself among the forwards. The puck was faced and started on its erratic, whimsical journey, darting like a wild thing back and forth, up and down. Before the game seemed really well begun, the circular piece of rubber came within Varrell's sweep, and clung to the heel of his stick. He whirled to the right to dodge Barnes, passed across to little Durand when Melvin blocked his way, took the puck again from Durand as the latter was stopped in

## MAKING THE NINE

his turn, and then, with a swing and a snap, shot it hard at the posts. The goal-tender brought his feet together as quickly as he could, but not quite quickly enough; the puck was already past him, flying knee-high over the ice like a swallow skimming the ground.

“Centre again!” cried Melvin, surprised and vexed at the ease with which the thing was done. “Brace up, Sands,” he called encouragingly to the goal-keeper. “Accidents will happen; they won’t do it again.”

The first forwards did better for a time, driving the puck down by sheer force through the intimidated second defence. Twice they shot for goal and missed, and then Varrell got a chance again and with a kind of scoop with stick directly in front, lifted the puck in a long beautiful arch twenty feet high to the farther end. Sands sent it back again with almost as good a lift. A lucky second stopped it, passed it to Varrell who nursed it along in a strange, wabbling course, and delivered it safely to Durand. The latter swept ahead in turn, and then while Melvin was wondering in what direction Durand

## ON THE ICE

was going to wheel, Varrell took the puck again and shot a beautiful goal right under the captain's own nose.

Sands and Melvin and Varrell trudged back to recitation together. "Where did you learn to play?" asked Sands. "You handle a stick like a professional."

"I spent last year at a Canadian boarding-school," answered Varrell. "There was good ice for months, and hockey was about the only game we had."

"You and Durand played the whole game for the second. What a squirmer the little rascal is! He doesn't weigh more than a hundred and ten, and yet you can't knock him over to save you."

"He checks low," said Dick, "and is firm on his feet. But he's awfully light. I doubt if he has much staying power."

"I think you're wrong," said Varrell. "I've seen that kind before; they never get tired."

In the next day's practice, Varrell and Durand being on the scrub, the score at the end of the first half was even. In the second half the two

## MAKING THE NINE

men played with the first team, and the scrub defence was kept so busy that the game seemed to centre around their goal-posts, and Melvin had finally to transfer Sands to the other side to give him a share in the practice. To furnish some test of endurance, the length of the half was doubled. When time was called, Durand was bobbing and twisting and checking and shooting as busily as ever, while one of the big forwards was obviously fagged, and Melvin himself felt that his ankles were rebelling at the unusual strain.

That settled the question of the team ; Varrall and Durand had earned their places upon it. Two or three days later a meeting of the team was held to receive Melvin's resignation.

"I've got the team together," he said, "and with that my duty is done. The best captain for us now is the man who knows most hockey and can teach us the most ; I'm not that man."

The players at first expostulated ; then finding that Melvin was in earnest, very sensibly

## ON THE ICE

did what they knew he wanted them to do,—elected Varrell captain.

“I think it’s a mistake,” said Sands to Barnes, as they came down the dormitory stairs. “Nobody knows Varrell. But there’s no use arguing with Melvin about a thing of this kind. He’s one of those obstinately honest fellows who stand up so straight that they fall backwards.”

“You dropped the Greaser captaincy like a hot shot,” quoth John Curtis on the way out from chapel, as he grabbed Melvin by the coat collar with the familiarity of an old crony, and grinned in his face. “Knew you were going to get licked, didn’t you? You’re a foxy one.”

Dick looked up and caught a fleeting troubled look on the face of Varrell, who stood eying them intently some distance away. “I wasn’t good enough,” he said aloud, as if Varrell could hear him. “On a team like ours, I’m content to fight in the ranks.”

As John did not understand this, he merely uttered an incredulous “Oho!” and, giving his

## MAKING THE NINE

classmate a slap on the shoulder to convey the impression that he was not to be fooled, went outside to consider the answer more fully and wonder if the Greasers were really trying to spring some new trick upon the Yanks. Melvin swung into the Greek room and opened his Homer with a chuckle of pride. "That would pass for a Delphic response. He doesn't know what I meant. And he won't know until the game," he added, with the old determined look coming back into his face.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BATTLE

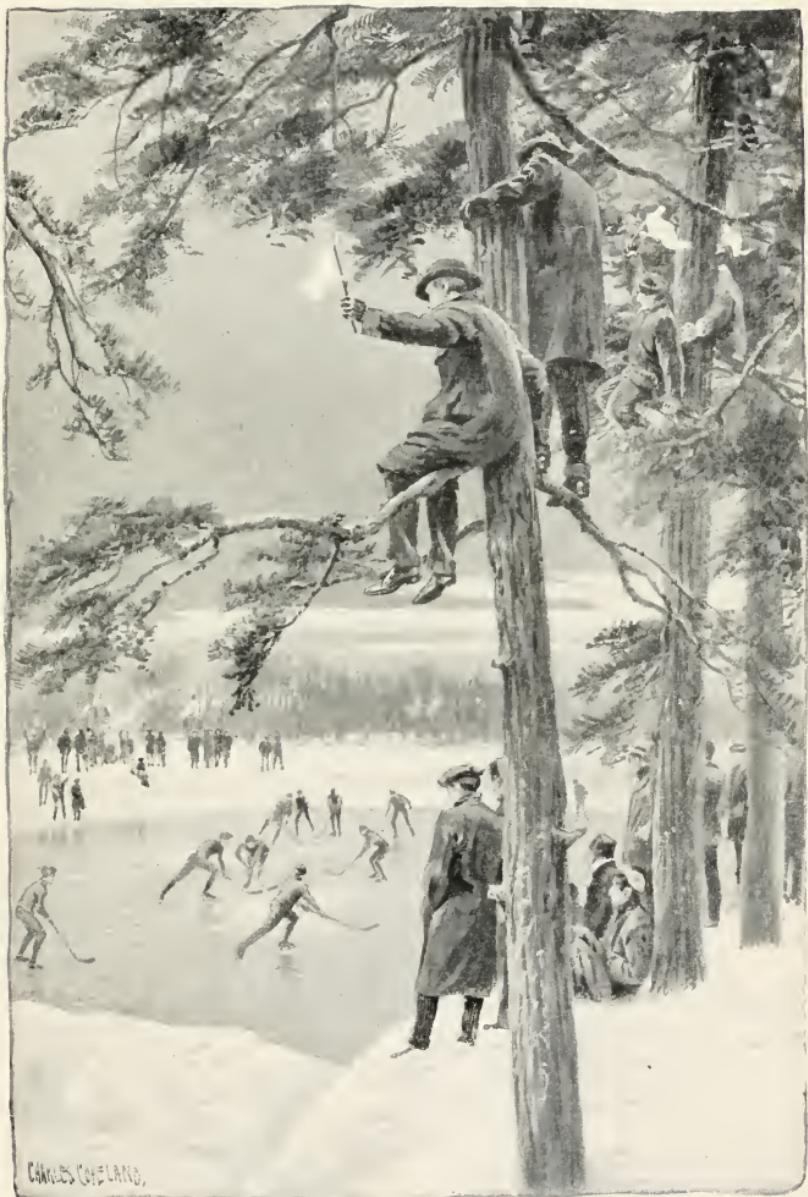
VARRELL took to the management of the team with a quietness and assurance that put hope into the hearts of the small but determined band which represented the great West. The few days that were left for practice were used to the utmost. In the morning the captain found time to show individual players about shooting and lifting and stopping shots. In the afternoon he drilled the team in passing and dodging and checking. There was a little murmuring when a big forward was taken out of the game because he was uncertain on his skates; and more still when another was relegated to the list of substitutes for playing his own game instead of fitting into the scheme for team work. But Varrell's answer was conclusive: "Our only chance to win is by team play. We have no stars, and on

## MAKING THE NINE

their team are two or three men who have played in the best city rinks. United we win ; scattered we lose." The murmurers said no more.

That last Saturday before the Christmas holidays was clear and cold. The course had been chosen on the river where high banks ran nearly parallel twenty yards apart. The snow, which had been cleared away the day before, was piled up behind the goal-posts, forming end barriers sixty yards from each other, and completing, with the river banks, a natural enclosure of about the regular rink size.

On the banks gathered the patriotic factions,—the New Englanders in the open field on the left, swaggering merrily about their fires and hurling derisive cheers across the ice to the Western contingent, who were established among the pines on the right. This latter band of supporters, though weaker in numbers, had, from their position, a certain advantage which they made the most of. They swarmed into the trees with impromptu banners; when they were out-cheered, they devised an unintelligible chant which made up for lack of voices; and, finally,



CHARLES M. RUSSELL,

The Western contingent were established among the pines  
on the right. — *Page 26.*



## THE BATTLE

Tompkins of Montana developed a weird, penetrating yell, something between a whoop and a scream, which no one on the opposite bank could imitate or match, and which he uttered at impressive intervals from the upper branches of the tallest pine.

Yet, with all this show of patriotism, the noisy rivalry seemed quite free from bitterness. The gibes flew back and forth ; there were cheers and counter cheers and chants, and Montana hoots from the pine tree, but the mood was of frolic, not of fight. For the spectators it was a lark, pure and simple ; hardly any one really cared at the outset what the result was to be.

On the ice the spirit was different. Dick looked into John Curtis's face and, behind the patronizing grin, read very clearly a poorly masked defiance. Todd, the Yank forward end, fingered his stick nervously over the ice as he waited for the call to places, and on his cheeks appeared the telltale white spots which Dick had seen before in the great football games when Toddy had set his teeth and fought for ground by the inch. Bosworth, the Yank cover-

## MAKING THE NINE

point, leaned scowling on his stick, eying his opponents with sombre malevolence.

"They are fighters, not players," said Dick to himself, disapprovingly. "They seem to think they're out against Hillbury."

And it did not occur to him that his own men looked equally fierce and determined. Sands stood ready at goal, but he had not a word for the boy who was beside him waiting to take his sweater when the game was called. Varrell was moving about with the quiet confidence of a master, which is more impressive to an opponent than noisy display. And as for Melvin himself, one did not need to be told that his whole heart was in the contest. The school knew well that what Melvin did, he did with all his might; a stranger would have read determination in the open face. Little Durand was about the only one of the fourteen who seemed to share the mood of the spectators. He flourished and circled about, chattering gayly up to the very moment of beginning.

The preliminaries were soon arranged. "Ready!" called the captains, and a moment later, at the first sound of the referee's whis-

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tle, the two forwards were scraping and twisting to secure the puck on the "face-off." Curtis got it, or thought he had; but before he could really call it his, a Greaser blocked his play, and Durand, dexterously picking out the puck, swept it across to Rawle, who dribbled it along, passed back to Durand, received it again, and lost it in the crush at the Yank goal. In another moment it came flying through the air on a lift, far down in the Greaser defence field.

Dick succeeded in stopping it and sending it on toward Varrell. The Greaser captain was off-side; but he allowed his opponent just to touch the puck, and then with a sudden swing to one side he was off down the ice, sweeping the puck with him. The first opponent he dodged. Big Curtis, who was next in order, made him pass; but the exchange gave him the puck again, and after several quick diagonal passes with Durand that brought them near the Yank goal, Varrell gave his stick a sudden hard flourish, and the puck shot like an arrow between the goal-posts, grazing the goal-tender's knee as it passed.

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It was all done so quickly, so unexpectedly, that for a moment the Western supporters under the pines and in the pines seemed unaware that their team had scored. Then as the sticks of the team brandished in air made the fact clear, a confused mixture of cheers, screeches, whoops, and catcalls gave proof that the West was both patriotic and appreciative. On the New England side indifference seemed to prevail.

“One!” said Sands with joy, as the puck came back to the centre.

“The first one, you mean,” returned Dick, in a low tone. “We’re not through yet.”

The next goal came hard. The Eastern team was heavier and generally stronger, but the members could not or would not play together; and if they got the puck down near the Greaser goal, they usually lost it before the goal was really threatened. Once a hard shot close at hand struck Sands in the pit of the stomach, and the spectators cheered and jeered as the gasping lad feebly lifted the puck away from its dangerous proximity to the goal. He had his breath again in a moment, however, appar-

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ently none the worse for his experience. Soon after, Curtis and Durand came together as both rushed for the puck at the same time, and the spectators under the trees cheered wildly as the little fellow crouched low for the collision, and the big football player sprawled over him upon the ice. But Varrell was the objective point of the strongest attack. Though he played coverpoint, he had an arrangement with Brown, one of the forwards, to exchange places on signal ; and the result was that he appeared now in the defence, now in the attack, apparently scenting the course the puck was destined to take, and always equal to the need.

The Yanks grew rougher and more violent. Todd took to body checking where it was not necessary ; Bosworth, when a Greaser got the puck away from him, followed on at his heels with ill-concealed malice, and banged away viciously at the unlucky man's shins, even though it was apparent that the puck was wholly beyond the pursuer's reach. Such tactics, unless checked, are usually the prelude to rougher play ; and Dick, for this reason, was

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doubly grateful when, from the edge of the mêlée around the Yank goal-posts, Rawle swiped the puck through a second time. Play had hardly been resumed when the referee's whistle announced the end of the first half.

As was to be expected, the jubilation under the pines was earnest and loud. In the opposite camp, where the neglected fires were dying away in smoke, quite different conditions prevailed. A few, with heroic repression of natural sympathy, still pretended to regard the whole matter as a joke, in which victory or defeat meant little or nothing. The great majority, however, unable to rise to this level, were distinctly conscious of having in some way been cheated. They had come out to be amused, and part of the amusement was to consist in seeing the impudent Greasers given a sound beating. And here were their men, including such big husky athletes as Curtis and Todd, and fellows who had been glorified as city rink experts, like Bosworth and Richmond, overthrown by a set of amateurs.

“Rotten!” said Marks, the connoisseur of

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sports, as he interviewed Curtis and Todd during the intermission. "Perfectly rotten! Did you get us up here to fool us?"

"I didn't ask you to come," returned Curtis, trying to keep his good nature. "If you can do much better, come out yourself."

"Oh, I'm no athlete," rejoined Marks, hastily, "but I can see what the fault is better than you do. That Varrell plays most of their game. You've got to use him up. Give them a rougher game. Push 'em hard. When two of you start for the puck, let the puck go where it pleases; just smash at the man. When the man's out of the way, you can take your time about the puck. You're heavy and have the advantage."

"That seems rather mean," said Curtis.

"Mean!" exclaimed Marks. "Did you ask a Hillbury man to excuse you when you tackled him on the football field? I guess not."

Curtis glanced around the group and read the looks of approval. "Well, then," he said finally, "make it rough, but let's have fair play," — his eye rested on Bosworth as he said this, — "and

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no low tricks. Everything must be straight and aboveboard."

When the game began again, the new spirit was immediately apparent. The Yanks got the puck and tried to drive it down by weight, but the off-side rule checked them. Durand still stole the puck from behind their sticks and put his shoulder so low that he could not be overturned; while Varrell still hovered on the edge of the scrimmage and drew the puck as a magnet draws a scrap of iron. Despite the heavy body checking, the play lingered about the Yank goal, for the Yank forwards did not follow the puck back closely on the defence, and Melvin or Sands soon sent it into Yank territory again. Rawle tried for goal, and failed. Durand missed in his turn, and then Varrell got the puck thirty yards away, and while his opponents were watching for a pass, by a long beautiful shoot made the third score for his side.

And now the Yanks' patience gave out. Rules or no rules, they were determined that their opponents should make no more goals.

Again Varrell took the puck, and with his

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familiar tricky movement of the wrist started down the ice.

“Look out for Bosworth,” yelled Durand, whom Todd was obstructing at the side-lines. But Varrell’s dull ears served him ill. Bosworth, who was close at the Greaser’s heels, thrust his stick suddenly between Varrell’s rapidly moving legs and threw him with a crash to the ice, right under the feet of Richmond, who was speeding up from another direction. Richmond went down, too, tripping hard against the prostrate form.

The Greasers hissed, the Yankees groaned. John Curtis, be it said to his credit, ordered Bosworth from the ice before the referee could interfere; but the advantage of the “accident,” as Bosworth called it, was on the side of the Yankees. Varrell was helped off the scene, barely able to lift his leg.

The teams went on with six men each. With Varrell the Greasers had lost the mainspring of their attack. Superior weight and superior physical strength began to tell. The puck kept returning to the Greaser defence. Then came a

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scrimmage before the goal, a quick shoot from the outskirts of the crowd, and the Yanks were exulting over their first score.

"Only four minutes more," pleaded Dick, skating down the Greaser line. "Hold them that long for Varrell's sake. We can do it, if we will."

And the weary six rallied once more. Durand was knocked about like the puck itself, but he stuck gamely to his work, and zigzagged and circled and dodged as before. Sands saved one goal with his hands, another with his feet. Dick met body check with body check, and lifted high and sure. But never before had he listened so anxiously for the sound of the referee's whistle. When it came, and he knew certainly that the game was won, he flung his stick into the air and led the gathering Greasers in a long, hearty cheer for Varrell, who, lying on the meadow bank bedded in Yank blankets, was watching the result with his heart in his mouth.

"Great work you did this afternoon," said Tompkins two hours later, popping his head into Melvin's room. "Any part of you that isn't black and blue?"

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"I didn't suffer much," replied Melvin. "It wasn't as bad as it looked."

"I hope not," said Tompkins. "Do you know what battle in Roman history the fray reminded me of?"

Dick shook his head. "I don't know any history. I passed it off last year."

"The battle of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths," replied Tompkins, wisely. "It's a case of history repeating itself. The Visigoths won both times." And then he added, "I don't believe the Goths would have been guilty of some of the things I saw done on the ice this afternoon."

## CHAPTER IV

### PHIL'S RESOLUTION

THE Christmas holidays were over. Varrell limped no more, and Dickinson, who had long since discarded his cane, walked with quick, elastic step as of old, apparently completely recovered. A few new boys had entered school. One of these, who was somewhat rough in appearance and who struggled clumsily with the lessons of a lower class, was said to be a pitcher. He was older than most of the students, in years rather a man than a boy. This fact was not in itself remarkable, for there is no age limit at Seaton, and many an honest, earnest fellow who after his twentieth year has conceived a longing for an education has found opportunity and encouragement there. But Flanahan seemed not entirely of this class.

## PHIL'S RESOLUTION

"What about him, Sands?" asked Dick.  
"He looks suspicious."

"Suspicious! What do you mean by that?" demanded the captain. "He isn't the youngest fellow in school, of course; but he isn't the oldest, either. Why shouldn't he have a chance for an education as well as any one else?"

"He should if he really wants it," replied Melvin. "He looks as if he had knocked around on a good many diamonds before coming here."

"Do you mean that he's a professional?"

"Yes, something of that kind,—semi-professional would hit it better, I think."

"If he's a professional, I don't know it," said Sands. "I didn't get him here. He says he's an amateur, and he has certainly played on some good amateur nines. He can pitch, and we need a pitcher. That's all I know about it."

"And all you want to know," said Melvin, with a smile.

"Yes, all I want to know," repeated Sands.

Melvin passed to another topic: "Phil would like to try for the nine. Is there any chance for him?"

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“None at all,” replied Sands, promptly.

“That’s a fine way to choose a team!” retorted Melvin. “You haven’t tried him and yet you say he has no show. We searched high and low for football material,—fairly scoured the school, and here you are deciding offhand against a fellow whose playing you’ve never seen. No wonder the nine gets beaten.”

Sands’s face reddened: “I didn’t say I wouldn’t try him. I’ll try anything that offers. I only said that he hadn’t any chance.”

“Have you seen him play?”

“Yes; he can throw pretty well and field fairly, but he isn’t old enough or big enough or strong enough or experienced enough for the school nine.”

“Well, he’ll grow, won’t he?” persisted Dick. “Just give him a chance to work up.”

“I’ll give him just the chance I give any one else and no more,” replied Sands, decisively. “Every man who makes the nine this year has got to earn his place, and the fact that Phil is your chum and a friend of mine will simply make me harder on him. When I say he

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hasn't a chance, I mean that he cannot meet the standard. He may try as hard as he wants to."

They separated at the gymnasium door, each going to his own part of the locker rooms to dress. A few minutes later, as Dick was running upstairs to his regular gymnasium work, he caught the sound of Sands's voice exhorting the squad in the baseball cage. He paused a moment with a smile of approval on his lips, as he marked the steady, confident tones, and recalled the captain's sturdy resolve to hold to the merit system in choosing the nine. Then Flanahan's lanky figure loomed up by the doorway, and the smile on Melvin's face died suddenly away. He turned abruptly and went on his way upstairs.

"Phil," said Melvin that night, as the junior came in after supper, "should you really like to try for the nine?"

"Should I!" the boy's eyes sparkled. "If I had the ghost of a chance of being kept on the squad till we got outdoors, I'd say 'yes' right off."

## MAKING THE NINE

"What can you play best?" asked Melvin.

"I've always played in the out-field," Poole replied rather humbly. "I'm fairly safe on flies, and could always throw a little farther and a little straighter than the other fellows."

"An out-fielder must be a good hitter or they won't keep him. Can you bat?"

"They used to say I had a good eye," returned Phil, who was not used to singing his own praises. "I'm not heavy enough for long hits."

"If you're sure on the elements, go in and try," said Melvin, "but you must do your level best. The only way for you to accomplish anything is just to devote your whole thought and attention out of study hours to baseball and nothing but baseball. Do everything you're told to do and more. Study yourself all the time. Get help outside that the others haven't. Hang to the squad till they kick you off, and when that happens, organize a nine of your own and keep up your practice. If they call you a fool and a crank, just laugh and keep on playing. Are you willing to do all that?"

## PHIL'S RESOLUTION

The color deepened on Phil's cheeks as he listened. "I'll do more than that," he cried; "I'll shack balls, I'll tend the bats, I'll carry water, I'll do anything they put upon me. I'll try this year and next and the year after, but if there's any baseball in me, I'll make the nine before I leave school."

"Good!" exclaimed the senior, giving the boy's hand a squeeze that made the bones crack. "I don't know much about baseball, but that's the spirit that wins. Only don't talk about what you're going to do. Think a lot, but keep your thoughts to yourself. When you play, play with all your might."

They settled down to the work of the evening. Occasionally Dick glanced with interest across the table to see whether the hated Virgil lesson or the excitement of the new resolution was to possess Phil's thoughts. For a time the lad, with face still flushed, gazed vacantly up toward the picture moulding. Then with a start and a slam he opened his *Aeneid* at the fourth book, and ground away for two steady, patient hours at the lovelorn wails of the unhappy Dido, in

## MAKING THE NINE

whose fate he had about as much sympathetic interest as a horse on a coal wagon feels for the sufferings of the freezing poor.

"I'll bet on him in the long run," thought Dick, as he eyed the determined plodder.

The next day Philip Poole's name appeared on the list of candidates for the nine.

## CHAPTER V

### A TOUGH PROBLEM

MELVIN and Varrell returned from their Greek recitation together.

"I don't like the way things are going this year," Melvin was saying. "There's too much confidence. If the track team wins, it will be just as expected, with no credit to any one; if we lose, woe to captain and manager."

"You're right," said Varrell, "but forewarned is forearmed. Keep cool and reasonable and see to it that you don't lose."

"If it weren't for Dickinson," went on Melvin, "I shouldn't have taken the thing at all. You see, I feel a kind of responsibility toward him because of the way in which I got him to run last year, so I didn't like to refuse him."

"You know I wasn't here last year," said Varrell.

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"Why, of course! I keep forgetting that you came this fall. It happened this way. Martin discovered Dickinson,—you've heard of Martin, haven't you, of last year's senior class?"

Varrell nodded.

"Martin discovered that Dickinson could run, and Curtis and I got him out for the sports in the spring and stood sponsors for him until he had courage enough to stand alone."

"Won everything last year, didn't he?" asked Varrell.

"Quarter and two-twenty, hands down," answered Melvin; "but there's no surety that he'll do it again. Besides, no one can say yet what the effect of that ankle will be. The doctor thinks it will be as strong as ever, but I know a sprained ankle is very easy to sprain again. Without Dickinson we shouldn't have much to brag of."

Both boys turned to their work. Melvin, in the quiet business-like way with which he had learned to attack his lessons, opened his trigonometry on the desk and in a moment was obliv-

## A TOUGH PROBLEM

ious to all else but the problem which was first to be solved. Varrell's stint was of a different kind,—forty lines of "Macbeth" to be committed to memory before twelve o'clock. As this involved much repetition and possible interference with the trigonometry problem, he retired to the bedroom, where he could mutter at his ease.

They possessed two very different personalities. Varrell was tall and slight, his limbs hardly filled out to their proper roundness, with a clear-cut, intelligent face and striking gray eyes that were remarkable, not so much for what they showed of the character behind them, as for the power of sight which they seemed to possess. Ever alert and observant, even when his face was otherwise at rest, the eyes seemed the aggressive part of the boy. Their direct glance was like a ray of concentrated intelligence.

"I like Varrell," said Tompkins one day, in a burst of confidence, "except when he looks at me hard, and then his eyes cut right through me, and I feel as if he were counting the hairs on the back of my head."

Melvin was more substantially built. As he

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sat at the table, the cloth of his coat sleeves drew tight over the splendid deltoid and biceps, and his square, blunt knees showed hardened muscles rounding out beyond the knee-cap. If his face lacked the alertness of look so noticeable in Varrell, it yet had a composure and an air of self-reliance and honesty that rendered it no less attractive.

The learner of Shakespeare was restless. The first five lines were mastered in a chair by the window, the next five on Melvin's bed, the third on Poole's bed, and the fourth on a second chair. In the circuit of the room he had learned twenty lines.

"Another lap and I shall have it," he said to himself, gleefully, as he took his place again by the window.

The outside door opened and Poole came rushing into the study. "I want to tell you something, Dick, and I've just three minutes before Latin to tell it in — Whose hat is that?"

"Varrell's," said Dick, who had risen from the desk. "He's in the bedroom plugging away at Shakespeare."

## A TOUGH PROBLEM

"Hello, Varrell," said Phil, looking in at the door. "Shakespeare plays havoc with the beds, doesn't he?"

"Get out!" cried Varrell, waving him off; "you rattle me."

Phil joined Dick on the other side of the room. Through the open door they could see the Shakespearean scholar doggedly muttering over his book.

"Shan't we disturb him?" asked Phil, hesitating.

"Speak low and there'll be no danger," said Melvin. "His ears aren't quick."

The eleven o'clock bell soon broke in on the conversation, and sent the younger boy flying to his recitation. Dick sat down at the desk again and tried to take up his work where he had left it, but he was apparently in a very unstudious mood. His pencil no longer moved steadily over the paper; his gaze rested fitfully now here, now there, on the various objects before him; his flushed sober face showed that his thoughts were hot within him. Finally, he threw down his pencil in disgust, and sauntering over to the

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window, leaned his head against the sash and gazed moodily out.

"He's a confounded rascal!" exclaimed Varrell, who had been eying his agitated comrade over the Shakespeare, "but it's no fault of yours, and why do you bother yourself about him?"

"Who?" said Dick, staring at him in amazement.

"Why, Bosworth, of course," went on Varrell, coolly; "if what Phil says of him is true, he's even a bigger rascal than I always thought him."

Dick was nonplussed. His conversation with Phil had certainly been carried on in a tone too low to be audible to Varrell in the bedroom.

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"Why, that he has been getting some of those little fellows into his room to play poker and fleecing them, especially that boy with a short name with a 't' or a 'd' in it."

"Yes, Eddy," replied Dick. "He's in Phil's class." And then, looking curiously at his friend, he added, "Your hearing is growing surprisingly good, I must say."

## A TOUGH PROBLEM

"I'm sorry if I overheard what you meant I should not know," said Varrell, flushing. "If that is the case, I shall certainly try to forget it."

"Oh, I don't mind your knowing it," said Dick, "I only wish you could tell what we ought to do about it."

The clanging bell again interposed its peremptory summons.

"Twelve o'clock!" cried Varrell, as he made a dash for his hat, "and only thirty lines. I'll bet I'll be called on for the ten I didn't learn."

When Phil had time for longer explanations, he gave Dick more details of the happenings in Sibley 15, Bosworth's room. Eddy, who had given the information, was in Phil's class, and of about Phil's age. Smarting under a sense of ill-treatment and desperately perplexed as to how he was to account for the lost money, which had been sent him for purchases for the winter, he had opened his heart to Phil, who in turn had made haste to unburden himself to his older and presumably wiser room-mate. Hardly had he done this, when Eddy repented of his confidences and tearfully besought his classmate

## MAKING THE NINE

never to speak of it to a living soul. But the murder was out, and the best Phil could do was to urge Melvin to guard the secret.

"So, having stolen the fellow's money, Bosworth has made him promise not to mention the fact," said Melvin.

"Eddy said it was a matter of honor. The money had been lost in fair play, and he had no right to speak of it when it might get them all into trouble."

"So Bosworth says, I suppose," said Melvin.

"Yes, that's it; Bosworth says it's just a personal matter between them, and to tell about it so that it might reach the Faculty would be simply tale-bearing."

"What kind of a boy is Eddy?"

"Not very good and not especially bad, but just weak. He is terribly cut up about the thing, doesn't study any, and cries a lot in his room. I can't help pitying him, though I don't sympathize with him much."

Dick smiled: "I suppose you'd do differently in his place."

Phil grew indignant. "I rather think I

## A TOUGH PROBLEM

should. To begin with, I shouldn't be in his place. I wouldn't touch that Bosworth with a ten-foot pole. But supposing that I did get into the scrape, I'd take it as a warning to leave Bosworth and gambling alone, and write home an honest letter about the whole business."

"And that's the very thing Eddy ought to do," said Melvin, giving Phil's shoulder a slap.  
"Why didn't you tell him so?"

"I did," replied Phil, "but he is afraid to, and he wouldn't listen at all to my idea of telling Mr. Graham about it without mentioning Bosworth's name."

Dick grinned. Mr. Graham, the principal of Seaton, ruled the school with a strong hand. His was not a mailed fist in a velvet glove, but a strong, dexterous hand gloved in velvet with a mail back. The whole school saw the steel exterior; few really appreciated the gentleness of the clasp.

"I suppose they'd be fired if it came out," went on Phil.

"They wouldn't have time to say good-by, or at least Bosworth wouldn't. I'm not so certain about Eddy."

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A knock at the door was followed by the appearance of a head. Seeing that the visitor was Tompkins, Phil opened his Greek Grammar and plunged vigorously into study as if he had no other interest in the world. Tompkins looked from one sober face to the other, then gave a glance over Phil's shoulder at the page of the open book.

"Metres of Aristophanes! Is that what they give here to beginners in Greek? If it is, I'm glad I began out West."

Phil shut the book with a bang, and replied half petulantly, half amused that he should have betrayed himself so easily, "No, it isn't; I was thinking."

"Unpleasant thoughts," said Tompkins, with another glance at Melvin's face. "Well, I guess I won't bother you any more to-day."

There was no reply to this, and the visitor moved toward the door. As his hand touched the knob a new thought struck him and he turned suddenly on the boy.

"You haven't been losing your money, too, have you, Phil?"

## A TOUGH PROBLEM

Was it the warm sympathy in the Westerner's tone, or relief at finding that others knew the secret, or natural indignation at an unwarranted suspicion, that suddenly put to flight the boy's reserve? Philip himself could not have told.

"What do you take me for?" he demanded.  
"Not on your life!"

"Glad to hear it. Your classmate, Eddy, got bled pretty deep," went on Tompkins.

"We were just talking about him," said Dick.  
"It's a bad case."

"An easy game for a card sharper," said Tompkins, coolly, "and a big piece of folly by a little fool. Neither the sharper nor the fool ought to be here,—one's too dangerous and the other's too weak; but if I should go to Grim and tell him about the thing, and let him do with the fellow what he really ought to, I suppose I should never dare to look a boy in the face again."

"You probably wouldn't enjoy life much in school afterwards," said Dick, thoughtfully.

"I thought as much," Tompkins continued in the same tone. "If he stole or murdered, we

## MAKING THE NINE

could complain to the authorities and have him arrested ; but as he's only ruining the characters of a few little boys, it wouldn't be nice to tell on him. Great thing, this school honor, when you understand it ! Well, so long ! ”

## CHAPTER VI

### A WESTERN SOLUTION

"Do you think Bosworth's still keeping it up?" asked Melvin, as he stood before the fireplace in Varrell's room in Hale a day or two later.

"I am sure he is," said Wrenn. "You can look right across from this room to his windows in Sibley. His shades were down close all last evening, and he doesn't usually lower them, even when he's dressing."

"Tompkins's conduct is beyond me," said Melvin. "He seemed as indignant as any of us when the story came out, but I've seen him twice in the last two days hanging around with that gambler, as friendly as if he had known him for years."

"I thought Tommy was a pretty decent fellow," mused Varrell. "There's no counting on these wild Westerners."

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"Well, what do you think?" questioned Dick, returning to the matter that had brought him over to Hale. "Are we bound to sit quietly and see Bosworth play his faro tricks on these little fellows? The next step will be to get them all in debt to him, and then he can keep bleeding them as they have money by promising them a chance to get even again."

"And that's not all," said Varrell; "they'll have to write lies to their families in order to get extra money to pay up with; and when they get used to lying about one thing, they'll lie about another, and keep on lying till there's no truth left in them. A little kid that's tough is about the meanest and most pitiable individual you can find. He goes down hill like a ball rolling down an inclined plane,—friction disregarded." The terms of physics occurred naturally to Varrell, who took especial delight in the study.

"Suppose we talk to the boys," said Melvin, tentatively.

"It would probably do no good. The little fools don't know enough to take advice."

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

"Then we must deal directly with Bosworth," said Melvin, decisively. "It's an awfully unpleasant job to tackle,—makes you feel as if you were interfering in another fellow's private affairs, and setting yourself up to be better than any one else; but the thing must be stopped."

Varrell nodded in grave approval. "There's nothing else to be done, and you're the man for the job."

"Why not you?" asked Dick, shortly.

"Because," replied Varrell, with a smile of satisfaction, "you are Richard Melvin, the President of the senior class and the most famous full-back that ever shed glory—"

"Cut that out!" interrupted Melvin, authoritatively. "This is a serious matter, and we can't afford to have any confounded nonsense mixed up with it."

Varrell's smile faded reluctantly away. "I am serious. You can do the thing without giving the fellow a chance to face you down or put you in a ridiculous light with the rest of the school, or advertise your cheek. You hold too

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strong a position to run any risk. I'm a newcomer and practically unknown."

"Why shouldn't both of us go?" said Melvin, after an interval of consideration, still shrinking from an odious task.

Again his friend had a decisive reply. "No, he will take it better and it will do more good if you go quietly by yourself, as if you alone knew it."

Dick looked at his watch. "I think you are right, and if you are, the sooner the job is over, the better; so here goes!"

With these words he clapped his cap on his head and started for the door. Before Varrell could raise himself from his armchair and get across the room, he heard his visitor jumping quickly down the stairs.

"Oh, Dick!"

"Well, what?" came from the landing below.

"Remember that he's slippery. Give it to him straight. Don't let him lie out of it."

"Never you fear!" called back Melvin, as he plunged on down the stairs.

Bosworth was sitting at his desk with a

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

book open before him. His thoughts, however, were not on his lesson, as was clearly shown by the moody, fitful way in which his eyes wandered from mantel to window. His face wore a gloomy and bitter look, as if he were brooding on some particularly disagreeable event of recent occurrence that still rankled deep. His expression brightened as Melvin opened the door in response to the usual "come in"; for as Varrell had said, the senior was a well-known man, and Bosworth, who valued popularity far more than the ordinary virtues, had a moment of gratified vanity in the thought that Melvin was honoring him with a call. The pleasure was of short duration.

"No, I think I won't sit down," said the visitor. "My business is a rather unpleasant one which I can perhaps better attend to standing."

Bosworth's face hardened.

"I understand that you have been gambling with some of the little boys and getting their money away from them."

"I'd like to know who says that!" exclaimed Bosworth, indignantly. "It's a lie."

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"I'm sorry to hear you deny it," returned Melvin, calmly. "The information was pretty direct."

"It's a lie, just the same," answered Bosworth, fiercely, his pale face becoming in spots still paler. "It's no affair of yours, anyway."

"That's what I expected you to say. In one sense it isn't; in another it is not only my affair but that of every fellow here who feels any responsibility for the moral condition and honor of the school. It's a contemptible trick to teach these little fellows to gamble. The result can't be anything but bad for them, even if they don't get into trouble from it here in school. And you know what would happen if the Faculty got on to it."

"I suppose you're on your way to let them know," sneered Bosworth.

"No, I'm not!" retorted Melvin, taking a step forward with clenched fists, and then checking himself a moment to master the indignation that was boiling up in his throat. "But mind you, I don't say what I won't do if you keep this thing up. It's not impossible that I may turn

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

tale-bearer, but first I'll try an easier method. Quit this thing, and quit it right off, or I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had,—and I'll keep on thrashing you till you're glad to sneak out of town."

"Huh!" said Bosworth, contemptuously, but retreating to a safe position behind the table. "I'm not the only one that gambles," he added significantly.

"I won't discuss that," retorted Melvin. "You're the leader, and that's enough."

He turned toward the door. "I hope I've made myself clear. If you want to get hurt—badly hurt—just try another game with the little boys."

With that, Melvin shut the door and shot downstairs as if to put the whole scene as quickly as possible behind him. He kept away from Varrell's room in order to avoid the necessity of repeating the conversation, but with all his efforts it insisted on repeating itself over and over in his own mind, in exaggerated detail, until he was finally left with the uncomfortable impression that he had been ugly and had made

## MAKING THE NINE

savage threats and said ill-considered things, and that Bosworth had merely denied and sneered.

"It's just as I thought last year," he said to himself, dismally, "when Grim was so serious about the responsibility and the opportunity which the older fellows have. I felt then it was all nonsense; I know it's so, now. The fellow who undertakes to make things better in school just renders himself unhappy and gets himself disliked."

And then he felt again the impulse of the spirit that had carried him through so many months of discouragement to the final triumph of the great game. Unpleasant though it might be, his course was right; and having started on it, he would abide the consequences without wavering or shrinking. With this feeling uppermost, he marched off serenely to his recitation.

If he could have had a glimpse into Bosworth's room and seen there the most frightened boy in school, he would not have wasted so much time in misgivings. His visit had had its effect.

The next morning Phil did not return promptly from his recitation. When he did come, there

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

was a glint of pleased excitement in his very expressive eyes that aroused his room-mate's curiosity.

"What is it, Phil," asked Dick. "Encouragement from Sands?"

The boy's countenance fell. "Not much! I'm not likely to get encouragement from him. My news is about something else. Eddy has got his money back."

For an instant Dick enjoyed a sweet vision of a gambler, frightened into reform by bold threats, making righteous restitution to his victims. But the vision merely appeared and vanished, like the landscape under a lightning flash on a dark stormy night, leaving the boy more in the dark than ever.

"Got his money back! You don't mean that Bosworth has given it back to him?"

"I'm not exactly certain about that," said Phil. "All I know is that Tompkins came to him, asked him how much Bosworth had got from him, took out the money, said it came from Bosworth, and then made Eddy promise not to play again, and gave it to him."

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Dick whistled. "What in the world had Tommy to do with it?"

"Didn't I tell you that I don't know!" said Phil, impatiently. "The main thing is that Eddy's got his money back and has promised to keep out of such things in the future."

"It's mysterious," said Dick.

"Mysterious!" echoed the boy. "I don't care about the mystery. It's a low-down business, and Eddy is mighty lucky to get out of the hole. The worst thing about it is, that it will do him no good. I can't really sympathize with the fellow. He hasn't any moral backbone at all."

"You ought to try to stiffen him up," said the wise upper-class man.

"Stiffen him up! stiffen an eel!" returned the disgusted junior. "The only way you can do that is to kill it."

If Phil was superior to curiosity, Melvin was not and Varrell was not. Together they lay in wait for the Westerner as he came whistling upstairs, and in a trice had him in the room, with the door held tight closed behind Melvin's

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

square shoulders, undergoing a cross-examination.

But Tompkins proved a most unwilling witness. He declared that he had no information to give. When they threatened to choke him, he gave them a bland smile; when told he would not be let out for dinner, he averred that he wasn't hungry; when promised imprisonment for all day, he announced himself wholly content, as he had a lot of hard problems to do in which he should be delighted to have Melvin's assistance. At last Varrell abandoned the examination and began to talk athletics. Presently he asked Melvin whether he had found Bosworth in when he visited him the day before.

"Why, yes," replied Dick. "Didn't I —"

A wink from Varrell stopped him.

"Tell us about it."

As Dick, prompted by Varrell's shrewd questions, launched out on a detailed account of yesterday's interview, Tompkins passed quickly from assumed indifference to open interest, and from open interest to self-forgetfulness. With the end of the story he burst into a shout.

## MAKING THE NINE

"Well, that's what I call rubbing it in! and the poor chap hadn't a cent to his name!"

Varrell rose with solemnity. "Look here, Tommy, that requires explanation. Whatever he is, the man isn't a poor chap in any good sense. He doesn't deserve any pity unless because of the way in which he gave back the money, and that you're bound to tell us. You've said too much now to keep the rest."

Tompkins was bursting with merriment. The secret he could keep, but not the joke.

"I'll tell you two fellows, not because you've made me, or because it's any of your business, but just because it's so blamed funny that I can't keep it in, and you're the safest people to trust it to. I made up to Bosworth and got him to ask me to play with him. I reluctantly consented, and before we were through I'd cleaned him all out and had the money to give back to the kids. Then the very next day Dick pounced upon him and threatened his life, and he hadn't a dollar of his ill-gotten gains about him. That's where the joke comes in. It's rich!" and he burst out again in a noisy laugh.

## A WESTERN SOLUTION

But neither Melvin nor Varrell seemed to appreciate the joke.

"And that's the way you got the rascal to give back the money?" asked Melvin, aghast.

"Yes, why not?" said Tompkins. "Tar the devil with his own stick!"

Varrell looked at Melvin, and Melvin looked at Varrell, and neither knew what to reply.

"How could you do it?" said Melvin, at last. "Don't you know that it's totally against all rules? They'd fire you without a moment's notice, if they knew you played."

"They won't know it," said Tompkins, coolly. "Bosworth isn't going to tell them, and I'm not and you're not. Besides, I don't play. This was only a special emergency."

"But how could you do it?" repeated Varrell, who considered the practical side, as Melvin the moral. "Bosworth must be an old hand at the game."

Tompkins was standing by the door which Melvin had long since abandoned. He turned on the threshold, and holding his head tightly

## MAKING THE NINE

framed between jamb and door, he answered with a patronizing air: "Oh, Bosworth plays a pretty good game for a tenderfoot. But poker? Why, they teach it in the public schools in Butte!"

A Corner in Sands's Room





## CHAPTER VII

### IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

THE poker incident caused repeated discussions between the classmates. Melvin was sure Tommy's method was wrong, though he could not suggest a satisfactory substitute except to thrash Bosworth until he made amends; while Varrell, though disapproving of poker in general, maintained that in this exceptional case the means were excusable. Neither succeeded in bringing the other over to his view.

It happened that Tompkins, who was not bothered by scruples as to his course, was the chief sufferer by it; for additional victims kept turning up with sad tales to have their losses made good by the generous restorer, until Tommy had parted not only with his questionable winnings, but with the surplus of his honestly acquired quarterly allowance as well.

## MAKING THE NINE

This latter fact he did not confide to his friends. It seemed to detract somewhat from the excellence of the joke.

Meantime the baseball practice in the cage was taking the usual course. Besides Flanahan, two or three other fellows were pitching, among them Tompkins. The latter had been pulled out of obscurity by some enthusiast who discovered that he had had experience in the box, and so reluctant Tommy was now forced to take his regular turn in the cage with the rest. Phil did his work with all the energy he possessed, not because he had any real hope, but because his heart and ambition were in the contest, and even the prospect that the battle would go against him did not take away his joy in the fighting.

Flanahan had good sharp curves and high speed. His best balls were a jump at the shoulder and a fine abrupt drop. Tompkins had fewer curves at his command, but he could vary his speed in a most deceptive way, and he showed an ability to put the ball where he wanted it and where the batsman did not like

## IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

to have it come. Another advantage Tompkins possessed lay in his coolness ; gibes from batters or spectators never hurried or confused him, while Flanahan's quick temper went to pieces under slight provocation. Smith, the best class-team pitcher of the last season, was a third candidate, but ranked unquestionably after Tompkins.

Flanahan's curves were the delight and admiration of the spectators, who would cluster around the catcher's end of the cage when Flanahan was pitching, and express their appreciation by manifold ejaculations. Such wonderful rises and drops and shoots, the Hillburyites would certainly find impossible to hit. And so did the Seatonians, for that matter, though the result was really due as much to the wildness of the pitching, and the consequent fear of getting hit on the part of the batsmen, as to the skill of the pitcher. For the most part Flanahan preferred to let some one else pitch for the batting, while he practised by himself.

The first time Phil came up to bat Flanahan, he had the misfortune to get hit. Phil was a

## MAKING THE NINE

right-hander who batted left, and Flanahan's wide out off the plate caught the boy in the back as he turned to dodge, and inflicted a painful bruise. The result was to give him a scare that prevented his facing the pitcher for a fortnight, and confirmed Sands in the impression that he was too young and green to be of any use on the school nine. As the cage practice is necessarily limited to pitching, batting, sliding, and handling grounders, and Phil as a candidate for the out-field was not given much chance at grounders, he seemed to have excellent prospect of being dropped from the squad among the first. It was Wallace who saved him from this ignominy.

Wallace was the head coach for baseball at the great university near by,—a graduate a year or two out of college, with an enthusiasm as unprofessional as his knowledge of the game was complete and technical. He could pitch and field and hit; he was a master of the ritual of that mysterious coaching book in which are written all possible details of play under all possible circumstances, and on which the Var-

## IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

sity candidates are examined for their positions as a candidate for a degree is quizzed by the specialists who sit in commission over him. Indeed, Wallace was more of a master than the original authors, for the supplement was of his own making. Though not a Seatonian himself, his baseball sympathies were wide, and his college mates from Seaton had found no difficulty in enlisting his help for the school nine.

He began with grounders which he made the boys take with heels together and elbows between the knees, bending slightly forward as they settled. Some did this instinctively as the most natural way, others went down on one knee or tried to make the hands alone a substitute for a solid wall of arms and legs. With others, again, Wallace found fault for sinking for the ball and rising before they got it. "Settle, get the ball, then rise and throw" was, according to the college expert, the right order of movements for "gathering in" grounders.

After grounders came starting and sliding. At first he put them through a series of standing sprint starts, like the old-fashioned erect start

## MAKING THE NINE

for short races, with first steps short to develop immediate speed; then the double balancing start that the base-runner uses as he poises off first base ready to return instantly, or go down hard to second, as the need may be. In sliding he urged the slide head first as the college ideal, at the same time adding that professionals generally slide feet foremost for the sake of greater safety. "Good sliding is fearless sliding," he said, "and the man who slides fearlessly is much less likely to be hurt than the coward."

When they came to the batting practice, the first thing which the expert did was to moderate the speed of the pitcher, who was sending in hot balls to show his ability. "Only slow pitched balls in the cage," was his warning; "the light is too poor for swift pitching. Moreover, in a confined place like this, a batsman is likely to become frightened at a swift ball as he wouldn't be out-of-doors."

Then he made the batters stand firmly, watch the ball closely, step straight out toward the pitcher, and strike quickly at what they were sure were good chances. "Don't worry," he

## IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

kept saying. "Don't watch the pitcher too much. The ball is the thing you are trying to hit. Don't commit yourself too soon; wait till you know what is coming."

Phil came up for his trial as nervous as a young boy can be under the eyes of an admired master whom he would give a month's allowance to please. "Steady, my boy, steady," said the kindly voice of the coach, who probably felt with Sands that he was wasting his time on an impossible candidate, but who, unlike Sands, was still generous and glad to help.—"Don't be frightened. 'Step straight, hit late, watch the ball and not the pitcher' is the thumb rule for good batting.—Less body and more arms."

Phil gathered himself together and cracked out a good wrist hit.

"That's the way. I always like to see that!" exclaimed Wallace, approvingly. "The wrist hitters are the safest hitters." With face aglow with satisfaction Phil stole back among the group of waiting players. "Step straight, hit late, and watch the ball," he repeated to himself. "Why didn't some one tell me that

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before? I've been going contrary to every part of that rule."

It is to be feared that Phil's lessons on those two days of Wallace's stay were somewhat neglected. He certainly haunted the cage at all vacant hours when Wallace was engaged in instruction, and when the practice was over he ran back to his room and put down in a note-book snatches of baseball wisdom caught from the collegian's lips. Many of the notes were doubtless futile, merely serving to give the boy the satisfaction of doing something to help himself on in his great ambition. Yet many were of great value, not only for immediate drill, but also for use later on in answering questions that unexpectedly arose, when the details of Wallace's instruction were as thoroughly forgotten by the boys as the teachers' comments on their first translations.

Wallace's view of the pitchers mystified Phil a good deal. With Flanahan the coach made short work, giving him only a few words of general advice. Tompkins, on the other hand, absorbed much attention.

## IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

"That man has the making of a great pitcher in him," the collegian remarked to Sands in Phil's hearing. "A couple of years of good training would do wonders for him. He is cool, knows what he is doing, and has the full arm shoulder swing which not one amateur in twenty ever gets."

"What about Flanahan?" asked Sands.

"He hasn't it," returned Wallace, emphatically. "His is a fairly swift arm throw with good curves and poor command. He's used to playing, and probably knows a good deal about the game, without possessing any great intelligence. I should put him, at a guess, on the edge of the semi-professional class. He has reached his limit and is beyond instruction. Tompkins, on the other hand, is good, improvable material."

"I guess Flanahan will do for us," said Sands, with a smug smile of confidence.

"It seems to me that I've met him before," mused Wallace, with his eyes fixed on Flanahan, who was still pitching; "but I can't now recall where or under what circumstances. He cer-

## MAKING THE NINE

tainly isn't the kind of man I like to see on a school nine."

"Oh, he's all straight," insisted Sands. "We often have old fellows here who are anxious for an education but have begun late."

"I don't doubt that," replied Wallace, "but none the less, semi-professional ball players don't belong on school teams."

Perhaps it was this difference of opinion regarding Flanahan that made Sands so luke-warm in his praises of the coach. The boys generally spoke of him with veneration, but boylike gave more attention to his appearance and his prowess than to his directions. No one profited more by these than the owner of the note-book, who learned to stand firmly and step out fearlessly; and as he really had a quick, accurate eye, he was soon hitting with the best. Sands was oblivious to all improvement, but the others noticed it, and Smith went so far as to warn him.

"You're finding the ball right, Poole, but don't get a swelled head over it. Outside, you may not be able to do a thing. There were

## IN THE BASEBALL CAGE

Baker and Lydecker last year, who couldn't hit a balloon in the cage, and yet used to swipe out two and three baggers 'most every game."

Then Phil went home and consulted the notebook, rereading the quotation from Wallace which Dick had said was the best thing his room-mate had written down: "The good player,—and the rare player,—is the one who can analyze his own errors, and instead of giving up discouraged when he fails, can discover and remedy the fundamental fault."

"I'm willing to be shown my faults," said Phil to himself, earnestly; "and if I stick to it long enough and use my brains, I ought to get ahead."

And Phil was right. Those who use brains do get ahead, in ball playing or anything else. But brains unfortunately cannot be furnished on demand, or ordered in advance, like a supply of coal for the winter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A TRANSACTION IN BOOKS

"HELLO, Dick, may I use your French dictionary?"

Without waiting for a reply, Tompkins pounced upon the book. It was the fourth time in the last ten days that he had demanded the use of this particular book, while on two other occasions during the same period he had found it convenient to prepare his English versions at Melvin's desk. If this had been all, Melvin would not have thought of objecting. To some boys ownership in books is but a continued series of lendings and borrowings, mislayings, losings, and findings. In Tompkins, however, this borrowing habit was of sudden and violent development. Similar tales of him had come during the past fortnight from other rooms.

## A TRANSACTION IN BOOKS

“Haven’t you any books at all?” demanded the senior.

“A few,” replied Tompkins, with his nose in the dictionary.

“Well, haven’t you a French dictionary?”

“If I had, do you suppose I’d want to use yours?”

“You certainly had one once. What’s become of it?”

“Gone,” replied Tompkins, resignedly, turning back to the B’s to find the meaning of a word which he had looked up only a moment before,—“like the meaning of that long adjective I just looked up.”

“Can’t you find it?”

“Maybe.”

“When did you use it last?”

“Don’t know.”

“Well, where did you see it last?”

“At the second-hand bookstore.”

Dick stared. “Did some one steal it, or did you lose it?”

“Neither,” replied the laconic Tompkins.

“Then you must have sold it.”

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"Yes, I suppose I must have sold it," sighed Tompkins. "Any more questions?" he asked after an interval, as Melvin gazed and wondered. "I really ought to do this reading, you know. I rather flunked on it yesterday, and I don't like to repeat the performance to-day."

There was a half hour of silence in the room. Then Melvin, squinting furtively out of the corner of his eyes, caught Tompkins gazing out of the window.

"You ought to have borrowed of me," said Dick, quietly. "You could have saved the books, anyway."

Tompkins shook his head. "I don't like to borrow, though I may have to do it yet."

"What's become of your term allowance?"

"Gone to those confounded little lambs that Bosworth sheared," said Tompkins, angrily, throwing off his pretence of indifference. "Eddy wasn't the only fool, by any means. First one would come to me and then another, and every one of them would put up a mournful whine, and promise never, never to do such a thing again, and hold out his hand for his

## A TRANSACTION IN BOOKS

money. They seemed to think that Bosworth was having the games just to give them experience and teach them profitable lessons, and that I was his agent to pay them back when they promised not to do it again. I wasn't very careful about the money, I suppose, and when I finally shut down on the thing, a good part of my own was gone. Then Dinsmore took the rest for a base-ball subscription which I'd promised to pay early. He left me just seventy-five cents. Since then the books have been going, and it's a month yet to pay-day. I have been a fool."

With this last statement Melvin mentally concurred. He had maintained from the beginning that the only proper way of dealing with Bosworth was to maul him until he disgorged, and his first impulse was to tell Tompkins that it served him right for having recourse to questionable methods. But wholesome respect for the generosity of the boy and sympathy with him in his present predicament, effectually prevented any such retort, and turned the whole force of his disapproval against the original offender.

## MAKING THE NINE

"For straight meanness, that Bosworth is the limit!" he exclaimed, with eyes aflame with indignation. "He ought to be fired this very minute!"

"He isn't much of a fellow, I think myself," answered Tompkins, more calmly, "but we can't do anything about it. The firing isn't in our hands, or he'd go, and a good many fellows would stay who now have to say good-by pretty abruptly. It isn't Bosworth that I'm thinking of, but how I'm going to get through the next month."

"Why don't you write the whole story home to your father?" said Dick, to whom the straightforward way always appealed.

Tompkins smiled wisely. "And have him write back hot foot to Grim, and want to know what kind of a school it is in which such 'scandalous performances' go on under the teachers' eyes. And Grim would hunt it to the ground like a setter after a rabbit! No, I thank you, — not that!"

A pause. — Then the inexorable recitation bell broke in upon them. "How mournful that

## A TRANSACTION IN BOOKS

bell sounds when you haven't your lesson," groaned Tommy, as he picked up his book and started for the French recitation. "It's like the thing they ring at funerals. Another flunk for me to-day! I'll be dropped by the end of the term, if I don't get this business off my nerves."

"Come in after supper, Tommy," shouted Dick at the door, "and we'll talk it over with Varrell. His head is longer than mine, and he may have something to suggest."

That evening the three gathered before the depleted bookshelves in Tompkins's room in solemn conclave. All agreed that to write to Mr. Tompkins would be equivalent to carrying the facts to the Principal.

"Can't you write to your mother?" suggested Melvin.

"That would be more dangerous still," answered Tompkins, dolefully. "She'd be sure I'd gone to the bad."

"Haven't you a brother or an uncle or a cousin that you could try?" asked Wrenn. "I've money enough myself. I could furnish you what you want as easily as can be, but I have to give

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an account of all I spend, and of course I can't lie about it."

"There's Uncle George in Chicago," said Tompkins, brightening. "I'd thought of him, but he's a bit risky, too. He'd help me quick enough, but I don't know what else he might do."

"That's the way out," said Varrell, authoritatively. "You've got to take some risk. Just tell him the whole story frankly, and explain why you don't want to write to your father, and I think he'll be square with you; uncles usually are pretty generously disposed. In the meantime don't sell any more books. I'll lend you all you need."

To this course the council agreed. Tompkins wrote the letter and waited six miserable days for a reply, which arrived by the last mail of a certain Saturday early in March. The date was important to Tompkins, for it was the day which brought relief from anxiety to a very worried and unhappy boy. There was a check in the letter, drawn for a larger amount than he had requested; there was also some strong,

## A TRANSACTION IN BOOKS

sensible advice; and finally there was a pledge to be signed and returned before the check was cashed, binding Master Tompkins not to play again during the course of his education. This the boy signed with eagerness, having already of his own accord made up his mind to this very course. With the pledge deposited in the post-office, and the check safe in his pocket-book ready to be cashed on Monday morning, with a feeling of relief warming his heart as the bright hearth-fire drives the chill from weary bones, Tommy went to bed that night as nearly serious and grateful as he had ever been in his life.

For another reason the date was important. On the night of this Saturday, or somewhere between the hours of six P.M. on Saturday and two P.M. on Sunday, the registrar's safe in the basement of Sibley was broken into and plundered.

## CHAPTER IX

### BURGLARY

MR. GRAHAM was not in Seaton when the incident occurred. He had just risen from a rather serious attack of pneumonia and by the doctor's order was spending several weeks in the South, in hope of more speedy convalescence. Meantime, as Professor Anthony was spending his sabbatical year abroad, Mr. Moore, the teacher of German, an elderly man of strongly pedagogic stamp, acted by virtue of seniority as chairman of the Faculty and took the Principal's office hours.

The safe stood in the registrar's little office in the basement of Sibley. It was an old affair which, before the vault had been put into the school office, had held the more important books and papers belonging to the school. Latterly it had served as a kind of overflow strong box

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for the less valuable papers, or smaller sums of money which came in after the big safe was closed or the day's deposit had been made at the bank. Miss Devon also kept in it her official record books, and the smaller amounts of money for the payment of wages and other minor bills which were under her charge.

On Saturday at six Miss Devon had locked up ninety dollars in cash and a check on a Boston bank for fifty dollars. On Sunday afternoon she went to the safe for a personal paper which she had enclosed with the school property. The safe was locked as usual and apparently in the state in which she had left it the night before, but the money and the check were missing.

Startled at her carelessness, for she felt that she must have mislaid the money, Miss Devon searched the compartments and drawers. The money was not to be found. She locked the safe door and opened it again. The lock was uninjured, the safe showed no evidence of having been tampered with. Trembling with anxiety, the girl glanced about the room.

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There were two doors leading into the office, one from outside by which she had entered, the other a rarely used door with an ordinary lock, opening directly into the passage that led past the store-rooms and the lavatories to the main entry of the dormitory. Neither door showed anything unusual in its appearance. She looked at the windows and her heart set up a violent throbbing. The shades were not in their usual position, and the fastening on one sash was open. While sure as to the unwonted height of the shades, she could not recall that she had altered them before leaving Saturday night, or that she had given any especial attention to the window fastenings. It was her habit to make everything secure before she left the office, but the labor involved in this had long since become mechanical, and she had absolutely no recollection of anything in connection with closing up on the day before.

Now thoroughly frightened the girl sat down and confusedly wondered what was to be done. The money was gone, no one except herself knew the combination of the safe, no one else

## BURGLARY

was responsible for the security of the office. If she could only recall definitely that she had locked the window! She must have done it, for it was her regular custom; and yet she had left rather early the night before to catch a car, and it was possible, just possible, that she had overlooked it. If this was the case, she had really been negligent.

Her glance fell on the safe and brought a comforting thought. She rose and wiped her eyes. "It's dreadful, but I am not at fault," she said to herself, resolutely, "and I won't worry. A man who could open the safe so easily would get in anyway, whether the window were locked or not. I'll just report the matter to Mr. Moore and let him take the responsibility."

Miss Devon let herself out and went in search of Mr. Moore. Half an hour later both were in the office,—Miss Devon collected and careful of her words, Mr. Moore looking very solemn and important and asking many questions. Together they went through the safe again, examined the windows and the outside door.

## MAKING THE NINE

and with the aid of the housekeeper's key unlocked the door into the passage, and scrutinized it carefully. It had shrunk somewhat, leaving a crack at the edge, but the lock was unharmed and the jamb unscarred. All in all, besides weariness and many useless questions, the investigation yielded only two tangible results, neither of which seemed to impress Mr. Moore as of any special value: one, the discovery of a drop of candle-grease on the floor before the safe, which Miss Devon pointed out triumphantly as a proof that the robbery had been committed during the night by the light of a candle; and the other, the fact that some one had been present on Saturday morning while Miss Devon was kneeling before the safe struggling with the rebellious combination lock. As the door finally swung open, the girl had observed one of the boys standing behind her, apparently taking a deep interest in her work. It was a junior named Eddy.

At this statement Mr. Moore's face took on a superior smile. "How fortunate that it was Eddy, and not some other boy!" he said. "I

## BURGLARY

gave him permission to leave by the eleven o'clock train on Saturday to spend Sunday with his cousins in Boston. His alibi is easily proved. Had it not been for this circumstance, he might have been subjected to a very unjust suspicion. I should be very loath to believe that any student had a hand in this."

"Mightn't Eddy have seen the combination and told some one else of it?" suggested Miss Devon, modestly.

"I think not," replied Mr. Moore, with an air of finality, but yet condescending to explain himself. "If he saw anything,—and he probably saw no more than that you were having difficulty in opening the door,—you may be assured that he forgot it immediately. The prospect of going to Boston would exclude almost anything else from his mind. He was in my recitation at ten o'clock, and a more absent-minded pupil I never had. I will question him, however, on his return, and make sure of the fact. I should rather be of the opinion that we have here the work of some clever professional who has found an unusually

## MAKING THE NINE

good opportunity to ply his trade with safety and profit."

"We have never had burglars in town," murmured Miss Devon, not wholly convinced. "I don't see why this little safe should attract their notice. Shall you put the matter in the hands of the police?"

Mr. Moore hesitated. "That will require consideration," he answered. "We may consult the police, but I doubt if we should be willing to incur the notoriety of a public investigation for so small a sum. The thief, I am afraid, is secure in his plunder. At present we had better say nothing about the matter."

They separated at the door and went their respective ways, Mr. Moore calm in exterior but much worried within, Miss Devon in a condition of woe closely bordering on hysterics. Under the teacher's smooth, long words she had divined an undefined suspicion that she might be making much of unimportant incidents to cover some carelessness of her own. The discovery came upon her with a shock. If Mr.

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Moore could harbor such a doubt, what might not other people think and say when the story came out,— the merciless, insatiate gossips of the small town? With all her heart she longed for Mr. Graham's speedy return.

## CHAPTER X

### MR. MOORE'S THEORY

THE story, or a distorted version of it, was soon out. The housekeeper hinted at strange doings at the office, and straightway rumor flew that the big vault had been rifled of a thousand dollars. Eddy came home and was examined by Mr. Moore; and his account of the interview, wormed out of him by zealous questioners, set a new tale afloat so much worse than the truth that the school authorities published the facts in sheer self-defence.

The students seized upon the incident with avidity. Petty thefts from gymnasium lockers had been known in previous years. Here for once was a real burglary in their midst, with a mystery to be solved. The boys attacked the problem tooth and nail, but their method was one of hypothesis and discussion rather than of

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investigation. Some pictured a masked burglar, operating in the dead of night. Others held dark suspicions of Miss Devon. Still others advocated the view that it was a sneak student who had in some way got into the room unobserved and juggled with the knob of the safe until it had opened. For several weeks after, doors whose bolts had not been shot since the year began, were very carefully locked when bedtime came.

Among the first arguments introduced into the discussion was the example of the safe at Morrison's which Tompkins had opened so easily in the fall. This suggestion was followed up among Tommy's friends by a jocose reminder that Tommy, who had been very short, was suddenly flush again. Outside the circle of friends, the statement was repeated without the character of jest. By the time it had made the circuit of the school, it had acquired the addition that Tompkins was suspected of the robbery, and that he was to be expelled as soon as Mr. Graham returned.

Sands brought the new version to Melvin  
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## MAKING THE NINE

with a worried expression on his face. Tompkins was his second pitcher ; he couldn't afford to lose him. Melvin carried the matter to Varell ; together they waited on Mr. Moore.

The acting Principal received them with his usual comprehensive smile,—a smile that was typical of his general disposition. He was a bland, benevolent, scholarly man, comfortably content in the consciousness of his superior attainments as compared with those of the pupils under him, "an easy marker and an easy mark," and, of course, superficially popular.

"There's a story going around the school about Tompkins that we want to protest against," said Melvin. "It's an absurd story, but it might do him some harm."

"What is the story?"

"Why, that he is suspected of breaking into the safe. He opened a safe last fall at Morrison's when no one else could, and he's recently had a present of some money from his uncle. I think that's all the foundation there was for the story. We just wanted to say that we saw the check ourselves, and knew how he

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came by it, and that he isn't at all the fellow to do such a thing."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Moore, in real surprise. "No, indeed! I never dreamed of such a thing. I assure you, we haven't the least suspicion of Tompkins, or, indeed, of any other boy."

"They say Eddy knew the combination," said Varrell, who now spoke for the first time.

"That is an unwarranted assumption," replied Mr. Moore, warmly, "and very unjust to the boy. I have convinced myself by questioning him that he did not notice the combination; and he went to Boston immediately afterward. He is a harmless little fellow, quite unequal to any double dealing."

"He associates a good deal with Bosworth," said Melvin, struck with this view of the harmlessness of Eddy's occupations.

"Does he, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Moore, in a pleased tone. "I am very glad to hear it. It always does a little boy good to come under the influence of an older boy of the right kind. Bosworth's mother keeps a boarding-house for students in Cambridge, and the son is very

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anxious to be a credit to her and repay her for her sacrifices. I do not know a neater, more attractive boy in my classes, nor one who does his work better."

Melvin gasped in astonishment. A book knocked off the table by Varrell's hand fell heavily to the floor, but it produced no effect upon him. "He dresses pretty well for a poor boy," blurted Dick, not knowing what to say, and yet feeling that he must make some protest.

This answer touched one of Mr. Moore's pet theories, and stirred up an immediate reproof.

"You will pardon me, Melvin, if I term that a very unjust judgment. Neatness and care with regard to one's attire are habits decidedly worth cultivating, whether one is rich or poor. It often happens that a poor boy has friends who give him clothes a great deal better than he could afford to buy. It is manifestly unfair and unkind to charge him with extravagance until you know fully the facts in his case."

"That's very true, sir," remarked Varrell, promptly. The tone drew Melvin's eyes to the

## MR. MOORE'S THEORY

speaker's face. In reply he got a fierce look that shut him up like an oyster.

"Was that all?" inquired Mr. Moore, glancing at the clock.

"Yes, sir," replied Varrell, as the boys rose. "We only wanted to tell you about Tompkins."

"You may be reassured on that point. Neither he nor any other boy is suspected. The thief must have been a professional, but the whole affair is a mystery which we shall probably never solve. Thank you for coming to see me."

Once outside, the conversation between the two boys waxed warm.

"Dick, you certainly are the limit!"

"What now?" asked Melvin.

"What did you want to lug Bosworth into the conversation for? Don't you know he's a particular favorite of Moore's?"

"No."

"Well, if you took German, you would. Bosworth's mother was a German, and he knows German 'most as well as he does English,—makes rushes all the time."

"I can't be blamed for not knowing that."

## MAKING THE NINE

“Perhaps not, but you need not have connected him with the robbery.”

“I didn’t,” protested Dick; “I just connected him with Eddy.”

“Well, Eddy with the safe and Bosworth with Eddy, it’s all the same,” returned Varrell. “If Grim had been there, you wouldn’t have got out of it so easily. He’d have turned you inside out in no time.”

“But there wasn’t anything more inside me than out,” said Dick, perplexed.

“No, I’m afraid not,” rejoined Varrell with a sigh. “I say, Dick, who do you really think took that money?”

“I don’t know anything about it. Perhaps a professional, as Moore says.”

Varrell laughed aloud. “And he thinks some rich friend probably gave Bosworth his clothes. I know better. I saw the box in which his last suit came at the express office, and it was from one of the most expensive tailors in Boston. It arrived two days after the safe was broken into, and he paid the bill in cash. What does that suggest to you?”

## MR. MOORE'S THEORY

"Why, that as a deserving poor student he is a fraud."

"Anything else?"

"No."

"Supposing I add that the clothes were ordered three weeks ago, before Tommy very unexpectedly cleaned him out."

Dick still looked puzzled.

"And when Tommy was through with him, he had this suit coming, and probably other bills too, and no money to pay them with, unless he could get some suddenly."

Melvin stopped and looked blankly at his companion. "Do you really mean that you think Bosworth broke into the safe?"

Varrell nodded.

"What an insane idea! How could he do it?"

"Every one seems insane to a lunatic," answered Varrell, sharply. "If you aren't crazy, you are at least too stupid to live with sane people. Can't you see how he might have been able to do it? Just think."

Dick pondered a moment and then lost his patience.

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"No, I can't, nor any one else," he answered hotly. "Bosworth is a bad lot and a school fraud and capable of almost any ordinary meanness, but that doesn't make him a burglar or a murderer. Perhaps if he'd tripped me up in the hockey game instead of you, I might have a different opinion."

Varrell laughed with the satisfied air of one who knows that he has the better end of the argument. "You're wrong there, Dicky old boy," he said, clapping his irate friend cordially on the shoulder. "You could forgive him far more easily for tripping you than for tripping me. I know you better than you do yourself."

"All the same, I don't see any connection between Bosworth and the safe breaking."

"Well, listen. Eddy stood behind Miss Devon in the office when she was working on the lock. He saw the combination and told Bosworth of it when he was in Bosworth's room about half-past nine. I know he was there then, for I saw him there from my window. This suggested to Bosworth an easy way in which to make good his losses and pay for the clothes,—as he cer-

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tainly did pay a few days after. That, I believe, was the course of events, but I can furnish no evidence, and I don't see how any can be furnished, unless Eddy can be made to squeal."

"What about the check?"

"He probably burned that."

They stood at the point at which their ways parted. Melvin was thinking hard and kicking the gravel recklessly with his foot. A squall of dust and stones struck his companion in the knee.

"Come, let up on that!" said Varrell, brushing off his trousers with a show of indignation. "Can't you think without using your feet? There are disadvantages in this football training of yours."

"Excuse me," laughed Melvin. "You remind me of Bosworth in your 'care with regard to your attire,' as Moore put it. That last kick quite cleared my mind. I don't doubt that Bosworth is bad enough to take money from a safe, if he needed it and there were no chance of being found out. If in this case he was able to do it, and afterward had money to pay his bills

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with, the presumption in our minds is against him, and that's all. We haven't any proof and aren't likely to get any. Tommy isn't suspected and we aren't suspected. So what business is it of ours, or what could we do if it were our business?"

"First answer me a couple of questions," said Varrell. "Why did you go to Bosworth and threaten him as you did?"

"Because he was doing a lot of harm in school, and that was the only way to stop it."

"And now you've stopped the poker-playing, do you think he's a fit fellow to stay here?"

"No, he's probably bad in other ways and will do more harm before he's through, but I don't know about that, and I did know about the gambling with the little boys."

"And I do know about this," added Varrell, decidedly. "In the first place, he's got hold of Eddy again and made him lie to Moore about the safe combination. I saw him in Bosworth's room that Saturday morning talking about it."

"There you go off the track again!" laughed Dick. "You *saw* him in Bosworth's room; you

## MR. MOORE'S THEORY

*guessed* he was talking about the safe. The only thing there of any consequence at all is what you really saw."

A look of annoyance settled on Varrell's face. "Look here, Dick," he began, as if he had something important to say. Then suddenly changing his tone, he added significantly: "You're right, the only thing of consequence is what I saw. Some people see more than others," and sheered off abruptly toward his room.

"What a queer chap Wrenn is!" mused Dick, as he lazily climbed the dormitory stairs. "Sometimes he's as keen as a razor; at others he gets an idea fixed in his head, and you can't knock it out with a club. I hope he won't get his mind set on this safe business."

## CHAPTER XI

### FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

MR. GRAHAM was at home again, to the relief of both school authorities and boys. He, of course, heard the tale of the robbery of the safe immediately after his arrival, and went over the matter exhaustively with Miss Devon, whose troubled mind was definitely comforted by the Principal's emphatic assurance that she was wholly beyond suspicion. Later he was given Mr. Moore's version.

"I am sure we are making too much of the matter," said the teacher in conclusion. "We have been a little careless, and are paying a moderate fine for our offence."

"The loss is to me the most unimportant consideration," said Mr. Graham. "I would gladly sacrifice the money to learn how it disappeared. If a professional burglar took it,

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

we are simply chance sufferers. If a boy took it, the act was probably due to some desperate distress and sudden temptation. That would mean, according to my experience, either gambling or a bad case of extravagance and debt. These are not pleasant conditions to surmise, but if they exist, I should like to know definitely about them."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Mr. Moore, to whom such a possibility had never occurred.

"Mind, I don't say that a boy did it," Mr. Graham hastened to add. "I am merely explaining why I want to *know* that he did not. Eddy seemed to be very nervous when I questioned him this morning."

"He was probably frightened at being examined twice," said Mr. Moore. "I saw nothing of it when I talked with him. Have you considered the possibility that Miss Devon —"

"What?" asked the Principal, as the other hesitated.

"May know more than she has told?"

"No, indeed!" replied the Principal. "Miss Devon is as honest as the day and as methodical

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as a machine. I have known her for years. It seems to me an act of injustice even to discuss the question."

The Principal's manner was not as sharp as his words, but Mr. Moore, whose life experiences had developed in him a goodly portion of caution, if not many other mental possessions of a practical character, felt no encouragement to continue the argument.

"And to me an act of treachery to suspect the boys," he said good-humoredly, "and so we are thrown back again on the hypothesis of burglary; but I leave the problem with you. It is a relief to drop the burden of it from my shoulders."

The Principal watched him as he trudged down the walk to the street, a stout, square figure marching sturdily and complacently, substantial behind, benevolent of aspect before. Mr. Graham was also cautious, and his thoughts, as he stood at the window, he would never have uttered; but they ran something like this: "Poor gullible old Moore! The years go by and leave with him more text-book knowledge and

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

more satisfaction in his attainments, but not an additional jot of practical sense. Burglars indeed! Miss Devon may not be sure that she locked the window, but I am, and that to me, at least, is of more consequence. When a person of her systematic habits has done the same thing daily for the last five years, it is highly improbable that she forgot it on that particular day. Therefore the open fastening was a blind to make appearances indicate that the thief entered through the window. Therefore he did *not* enter by the window, but by one of the doors. So far I have fairly satisfactory reasoning behind me, but here I begin to jump at conclusions. The thief came in by the passage door, and was a student.

“Why a student? Because it was an enterprise which a desperate student might very possibly conceive, but the servants never. And if a student,—then there certainly exists somewhere in the school a plague-spot which must be discovered and cleansed. What a delightful prospect for a half-sick, nerve-worn man to come home to!”

## MAKING THE NINE

Up the path from the street came a youthful figure of medium height, planting foot after foot with an air of business and determination.

“Sands!” said Mr. Graham to himself. “Another unpleasant task, but this at least will soon be over.”

“You sent for me, Mr. Graham.”

“Yes, to talk with you about Flanahan. Are you likely to want him on the nine?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the boy with a wondering face. “He’s our best pitcher.”

“Then I am glad that I can give you such early notice. He will probably not be allowed to play.”

“Why not, sir?”

“Because I am convinced from various facts which I have learned that he is not a proper person to play on our teams.”

“Do you think that we are hiring him, sir?” said Sands, a flush of indignation burning on his cheeks.

Mr. Graham looked at the student sharply. On the boy’s face was an expression of bitter disappointment and of indignation, but no sign

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

of guilt. "No, I do not," he replied heartily. "We haven't fallen so low as that."

"What is it, then, that you have against him?"

"Simply that he is not considered an amateur above suspicion of taint. I made some inquiries concerning him before my return, and the results were, in my opinion, conclusive."

"Are you *sure* about it?"

"Sure as to my opinion, which I may also say is the opinion of Mr. Wallace, who helped me in the investigation. The wisest course for Flanahan would be to withdraw voluntarily from the baseball practice and devote himself to the work for which he says he came here."

"Is this final?" came through Sands's quivering lips. "Isn't he to have a chance to hear the charges and defend himself?"

"Certainly, if he desires it," replied Mr. Graham, promptly. "You may come, too, and a few others who are especially interested. I want to be fair to you all, but my first duty is to the school."

The news was quickly abroad, discussed in every room and at every dormitory entrance. The boys naturally favored the unjustly oppressed,

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though some of the older fellows of influence, like John Curtis, Dickinson, and Melvin, who were not baseball players, sided with the Principal. Sands was disconsolate, Flanahan furious. The latter had talked with Mr. Graham, and returned greatly excited and able to give only a most incoherent account of the interview. On the main subject the pitcher's explanations were not entirely satisfactory to his supporters. He asserted wildly, denied sweepingly, and fortified his statements by expletives which repelled the decent-minded.

Sands himself was somewhat ashamed of his protégé, as he led him into the Principal's room for the hearing and sat down at his side, near the door. Mr. Graham had not yet come in. Melvin and Varrell sat near his desk at the upper end of the long room, opposite the door; at the side were Curtis and Arthur Wheelock, the manager, and several others.

The tension of the waiting seemed to be telling on Flanahan's nerves. His naturally red face had taken on a deeper hue; his eyes shifted rapidly from point to point; his fists

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

opened and closed and shook convulsively; his head nodded in sudden jerks in emphatic support of the whispered assertions which Sands seemed to be rather combating than listening to.

"Did you hear that?" said Varrell, with his eyes fixed on the pair.

"Of course I didn't, nor you either," said Melvin. "I can't hear whispers at that distance. Sands looks like a man trying to hold a fighting bulldog. I don't envy him his friend."

"Sh!" said Varrell, still staring at the two. "The fellow's wild. He's just threatened to smash Mr. Graham's face. Sands can't control him. Quiet! I'll repeat for you."

Dick gaped in wonder. He could see Flanahan's fierce manner, his clenched fists and lips excitedly moving, but not a single distinct sound reached him. Varrell, with eyes glued on the gesticulating man, began to repeat in phrases which matched the pitcher's agitated nods:—

"I'm no professional. Whoever says so is a liar. If he tells me so again, I'll smash his face. Yes, I will; and I don't care who he is, whether he's Principal of this old place or not. He's no

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better than me. I'll take it out of him if he gives me any lip,—just see if I don't! I know what he's been up to. He's been sneaking around Brockville. What I got from Brockville was too small to count,—hardly more than expenses. Let me alone, I tell you. I can take care of myself. ‘Fired?’ What do I care about being fired! Just let him say a word and I'll baste him one in the jaw that he'll remember.”—“I've omitted the cuss words,” added Varrell, in another tone.

Mr. Graham entered and walked toward his desk.

“Did he really say that, Wrenn?” whispered Dick. “Are you fooling or not?”

Varrell gave him an indignant look. “Of course he said it, and he meant it, too. Do you think I'd fool about a thing like this?”

“How'd you know?”

“Don't ask that now, you idiot! Just watch the Irishman and see that he doesn't do anything reckless.”

At Mr. Graham's suggestion the boys took seats near his desk. The Principal then read

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

aloud two or three letters, reported certain facts which he had himself discovered, repeated the opinion of Mr. Wallace, and then asked Flanahan what he had to say.

"Most of those things are lies," said the pitcher, fiercely. "I ain't a professional; if they say so, they lie."

"There's a difference of opinion as to what constitutes a professional," said Mr. Graham, kindly. "We will not argue about the name. The question for us is, whether you satisfy our standard. If you have ever received money for playing, whether the sum was large or small, we cannot allow you to play on our teams."

"I tell you it's just an attempt to blacken my reputation as an amateur," screamed Flanahan. "I don't care whether I play on this measly team or not, but whoever says I'm not an amateur is a liar."

Mr. Graham rose. "You forget yourself, Flanahan," he said sternly.

Flanahan choked an instant; then, beside himself with fury, burst forth in a flood of personal invective and threats, aimed directly at the

## MAKING THE NINE

Principal. So unexpected and so unparalleled was the outbreak that most of the audience sat silent and aghast, not knowing what to think or do. There were three, however, to whom a few expressions were warning enough. Melvin and Varrell sprang forward, clutched the irate ball-player by the arms and swung him about, while Sands leaped to their support from the other side. As Flanahan cursed and struggled, Curtis and Wheelock came to their senses and lent assistance. Together they hustled the furious rebel out at the door, like a half-back driven through a hole in the line on a tandem play. A few seconds later Mr. Graham was standing in the empty room conscious of a curious mixture of feelings,—mortification that such a scene should have been possible, but delight in the unhesitating loyalty of the boys.

Around the corner of Carter, Dick Melvin's two hands held Varrell's shoulders hard pressed against the brick wall. "No, you don't! It's of no use to squirm, because I'm not going to let you off. This thing has got to be explained,

## FLANAHAN STRIKES OUT

and with it some other mysteries. The more I think about it, the more there is to explain. You knew what Phil and I were muttering when you were out of hearing in the next room; you heard what this blood-thirsty villain was whispering to Sands twenty-five feet away; you saw little Eddy in Bosworth's room, talking about the safe, and you knew what he said. Sometimes you don't know what is going on right beside you; sometimes you hear what two fellows are saying to each other across the street. No juggling, now! Out with the secret, and be quick about it, or I'll — ”

“ You're a fool, Dick,” retorted the smiling Wrenn, “ or you wouldn't have to ask me. Let me go, and I'll come in after supper and tell you. Let me go, do you hear? ”

“ Well then, till to-night! If you're not on hand by seven, I'll come after you and squeeze the life out of you,—like this,” he added, catching poor Wrenn under the arms, and giving him a hug that threatened to crush in all his ribs at once.

“ No more of that! ” gasped Varrell. “ I'll come.”

## CHAPTER XII

### VARRELL EXPLAINS HIMSELF

“HERE I am,” said Varrell, opening the door of Melvin’s room just as the clock struck seven. “You don’t deserve to see me, but I’m here. Assault me like that again, and I’ll swear out a warrant for your arrest.”

“A lot you know about warrants,” sniffed Melvin; “though that may also be one of your specialties. Whatever a warrant may be, it won’t catch you as I’ll catch you in five minutes, if you don’t make a clean breast of the whole thing without any jollying.”

“Wind!” said Varrell, in good-humored contempt. “You remind me of Tommy, when he talks about Montana.”

“Come, Wrenn, this is a wrong way to begin,” warned Melvin. “Get down to business! You agreed to explain yourself. Now, out with it.”

## VARRELL EXPLAINS HIMSELF

"Where shall I begin? If you had any sense, no explanation would be required."

"And if I haven't, it's my misfortune and not my fault, so don't throw it at me. Begin at the beginning."

Varrell stretched himself out in an easy-chair. "Well, you know that I am a little deaf."

"I used to think so," replied Melvin, "but these things that have occurred lately don't seem to indicate it."

"Three years ago I had the scarlet fever," went on Varrell, paying no attention to the comment, "and it left my ears in bad condition. There is no use in going into the details of the case; it is enough to say that at one time the outlook was pretty bad and there was a general fear that I should become worse instead of better. My mother was greatly worried about me and consulted all sorts of people who are supposed to know about such cases. Some said that the deafness would increase, others that it might decrease if my general health improved. As the chances were apparently against me, they put me through a thorough course of lip-reading with

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the idea that if my deafness actually did increase, it would then be harder for me to learn. Luckily, my hearing gradually improved as I got better, and an operation put me ahead still farther, so that now I can hear, if not as well as you, at least decently well."

"And you still kept up the lip-reading?"

"I had to. Much that I was not quite clear about, I could make out with the use of my eyes. I finally got a kind of mixed sense; my eye helped out my ear, and my whole impression was due to them both. So I've used it right along."

"But is it a thing you can really count on?" asked Dick. "I've always supposed that lip-reading was a hit-or-miss guessing at what people were saying."

"It is guessing as reading print is guessing, only in lip-reading there is greater chance for mistake, for two very different words are sometimes expressed with exactly the same appearance of the lips. Still, I've seen some very clever lip-readers. I knew a bank teller who had suddenly lost his hearing, who was able in three

## VARRELL EXPLAINS HIMSELF

months to do all the work of his position in two or three languages. That's where I'm handicapped. I'm used only to English. That's why I can't do anything in Pearson's classes when he reads French aloud."

"And Richardson's mop of a mustache must be an obstacle."

"You bet it is. I loathe mustaches."

At this point Melvin's questions seemed to have run out, for he lapsed into a meditative silence which lasted at least a minute. Then he suddenly jumped up, grabbed his quiet visitor by the shoulder, and glared threateningly into his eyes. "Come now, stop it and tell me the truth! You're just trying to jolly me."

"It's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said Varrell, nodding his head in solemn accentuation of each phrase. "Go and sit down!"

Melvin dropped back into his chair.

"Do you remember," continued Varrell, "when we went up to Boston together last week and I suddenly burst into a laugh? You asked me what was the matter, and I told you that a

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funny story had just come to me. The funny story was told by a drummer facing us three seats ahead. You certainly can't have forgotten the time when we serenaded Masters, and he came out on his front porch and spoke, with the red fire playing on his face and the fellows yelling and blowing tin horns? Wasn't I the only one who knew what he said?"

"That's right," said Melvin.

"And didn't you see how I watched Flanahan this afternoon? I had to, I can tell you; those little short sentences are hard to get."

"I suppose I'll have to believe you," said Melvin, reluctantly.

"You would have done it long ago, if you weren't so blessed ignorant. Hello, Phil!"

Poole nodded cordially and sat down.

"Did you ever hear of lip-reading, Phil?"

"Why, yes. I know some one at home who is pretty good at it. Can you do it?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I've suspected you two or three times, but I thought I'd better not say anything till you spoke of it yourself."

## VARRELL EXPLAINS HIMSELF

Varrell gave Melvin a reproachful glance.

"Dick here doesn't believe in it. Did you ever see the shadow trick?"

"No," replied Phil.

Varrell got up. "Give us a big sheet of paper," he said. "That's it. Come here."

He pinned the white paper to the wall on a level with Phil's head, placed Phil near it and adjusted the lamp on the shelf opposite so that a sharp profile of the boy's face fell on the paper. Next he stationed Melvin two or three steps in front of the boy; and then, having bound a heavy handkerchief around his own ears, took a place just behind Phil.

"Now, Phil, without moving your head and in your ordinary tones, say something to Dick."

Phil obeyed. Varrell watched the shadow of the moving lips on the screen.

"Repeat!" commanded Varrell.

Phil repeated.

"Flanahan has been fired," said Varrell.

"Right!" cried the boy, delighted. "Try again!"

The experiment was repeated several times,

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and with one or two exceptions Varrell read correctly from the screen.<sup>1</sup>

"Why, you're a regular wizard!" cried Melvin, pulling the bandage from his friend's head. "That's the greatest stunt I ever saw."

"It's a pretty severe test. If I had known what you were talking about so that I could have had something to start with, I shouldn't have failed the last time. That's the funny thing about lip-reading; at one instant it's a blank, and the next you get the key, and the whole thing flashes out clear."

But even this amazing exhibition could not distract Dick's mind from the robbery. "Now tell me, please," he began, "what you really know by this method or any method about what Eddy said to Bosworth that Saturday morning in his room."

Varrell looked significantly at Phil.

"Oh, you can trust him," Dick made haste to say. "Phil is a lot safer than I am."

<sup>1</sup> A duplicate of this interesting experiment will be found recorded in an article on lip-reading in the *Century* for January, 1897.

## VARRELL EXPLAINS HIMSELF

“I hope you won’t think, Phil, that I’m in the habit of eavesdropping. A good many times I deliberately close my eyes to what people are saying, so as not to understand things they don’t mean me to know. But Bosworth is thoroughly bad and ought to be shown up, and since he has got hold of little Eddy again, I’ve kept my eyes peeled. Eddy was walking about in Bosworth’s room that Saturday morning before he went to Boston. I can see pretty clearly from my east window any one who comes near Bosworth’s window, and I was sure that I caught the words *safe, door, and combination*. The last I am positive about, for it’s a long word and easy to catch.”

“Do you suspect Bosworth of breaking into the safe?” asked Phil, quickly.

“Yes, I do,” answered Varrell; “but until it can be proved I don’t want the subject mentioned.”

“How could he get into the room?” persisted Phil, now deeply interested.

“By the passage door.”

“Do you think he got the housekeeper’s keys?”

“No, I don’t,” replied Varrell, “though it

## MAKING THE NINE

wouldn't have been impossible for any one to get them. There was an easier way: the door opens out and fits very loosely. He probably pried it open."

"With what?"

"With the flat ice-chipper that stands in the corner next to the stairs. It is strong, and has a wide blade that would not leave much of a mark. But mind, I guess all this; I haven't any proof whatever."

"Do you mean to try to get proof?"

"That's exactly what I mean to do," said Varrell, smiling. "I say, Dick, you'd better take lessons of Poole! He's found out more in three minutes than you have in a week."

Varrell's hand was already on the door-knob, when he checked himself and turned: "By the way, Phil, if you want to stand well with Sands, be careful what you say about Flanahan. Sands is awfully cut up about the whole business, ashamed and mad and disgusted to think that he has been pushing such a mucker. Just say nothing to him about it, or you'll get him down on you."

"Thank you," said Phil. "I'll be careful."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SPRING RUNNING

JOHN CURTIS clapped the book together with a sigh of relief. "That's the end. Much obliged to you. Going home for vacation next week?"

"No," said Dick. "Are you?"

"No, sir," replied John; "no vacation for me. Now that I've got into the grinding habit, you can bet I'm not going to slacken up. Do you know what I've been doing all winter?"

"Studying, I hope," answered Melvin. "You've not been here very often except on such errands as this."

"That's right; and I'm doing a lot better than I did. I'm getting on to a lot of things that used to seem all shut up to me. The Dutch phases me the most; I don't know why it is, but some way it won't go down. I swallow hard at it, too. I've dropped the Greek, and am

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taking Latin over again. My French and mathematics are pretty fair, and I'm a regular shark at chemistry."

Dick hooted; then checked himself suddenly. "They are all sharks in chemistry, I should judge by the reports the fellows give me."

Curtis smiled grimly. "I'm as good as any; you ask some of them and see. It's the first thing that I've really done well since I entered this old mill. The Dutch is the worst. I don't think old Moore is just square about it either. He lays himself out on those fellows who know it all, and just skims by us poor dopes who are wallowing."

"He's good-natured and easy, isn't he?" asked Dick.

"That depends. He isn't savage like Richardson, nor satirical like Wells; but he lets a lot of tomfoolery go on in his class and smiles blandly at it all, and then suddenly gets wild and drops on some one like a hodful of bricks from the top of a ladder. As it's usually the wrong person, it makes trouble."

## THE SPRING RUNNING

"What fellows are in it?" asked Dick, interested.

"Oh, various ones. Tompkins and Bosworth are the worst. Bosworth isn't often suspected, because he is a kind of a favorite of the old man, and always lies out if he's caught. Tompkins is smarter, and he won't lie,—I like that in him; but he has cheek like a mountain."

"What does he do?"

"Oh, all sorts of things; I can't remember them. The other day he came running in from the Gym without changing his clothes. He'd just slipped his coat over his sleeveless shirt, and buttoned it up high in the neck. He unbuttoned it again in the class without thinking, and Moore saw the low neck underneath. 'I don't want any half-dressed boys in my classroom,' he said. 'Tompkins, go and dress yourself properly!' Tommy went out and stayed half an hour. When he came back, he had on patent leather shoes with gaiters, a Prince Albert coat, gloves, a standing collar, and a silk hat. Where he got the hat, I don't know. He stopped a moment in the doorway and all

## MAKING THE NINE

the fellows looked around ; then he took off his hat, and walked calmly up to his seat."

"What did Moore do ?" asked Melvin,— "fire him out ?"

"No, he just said, 'Thank you, Tompkins,' and went on. It was a great get-up, but some way it didn't seem to have the effect intended. By the way, they say he'll have to do the pitching this year. Is he any good ?"

"Phil thinks so; and Wallace, I believe, spoke well of him."

"You'd better warn him, then, to be careful. He doesn't do anything bad, and he seems a nice fellow at bottom, but these little tricks may get him into trouble. They'd fire the pitcher on the nine just as quick as anybody else. You remember they sent off one fellow last year for putting a bonnet on the head of that plaster Diana that stands in the hall."

"That was for example," returned Dick, vigorously. "Those casts were the gifts of a lot of the Alumni, and the fooling with them had to be stopped."

"They stopped it for that fellow, anyway,"

## THE SPRING RUNNING

said Curtis, dryly. "Is this meeting on Saturday going to be any good?"

"I hope so," said Dick. "There'll be the usual indoor events and some short dashes on the wooden track outside. We've given good handicaps, and there ought to be some hard races."

"Then it'll have to be better than the Faculty Trophy performance last month. That was about as keen as a croquet match."

"We'll improve on that," replied the manager, confidently. "The fellows have been doing better lately."

There were practical reasons for the existence of the March handicap meeting. It gave an inviting opportunity for boys of every degree of ability to appear without disadvantage in a public contest, and so brought out new material. It was likewise both a formal closing of the winter's athletic work, and the first account of stock for the greater contests of the spring. With Dickinson and Travers in the sprints, Todd in the hurdles, and Curtis for the hammer and shot, there was still in school a very substantial remnant of last year's winning team with which

## MAKING THE NINE

to start the spring campaign against Hillbury. Yet gaps remained to be filled, new seconds and thirds had to be provided where firsts seemed fairly safe, and better men had to be found, if better men there were, for the most strongly defended events.

In the jumps and the pole vault was an especial dearth of good material. Melvin had been practising the high jump in the course of his daily gymnasium exercise hours, though without any idea of excelling in it. With legs full of spring and some intelligence to direct his efforts, the height at which he failed had gradually lifted. A month before, at the Faculty Trophy meeting, he had astonished himself by doing five feet four to the school champion's five feet five. The practice possessed now for him an additional interest. If he could keep on gaining inches in the same steady way, the spring contests would find him able to clear a very considerable height. Varrell, too, had caught the fever, and was toiling at the pole vault with all the zeal and intelligence which this peculiar boy possessed.

## THE SPRING RUNNING

A considerable crowd gathered that Saturday afternoon about the eighth-mile wooden track which lies behind the gymnasium. For the forty-yard dash the contestants came in a flock, four men in a trial, heat after heat, in quick succession; then the winners in sets of semi-finals, and three men in the final heat. The base-ball candidates were here almost to a man, for they had been practising starts and dashes during the winter for base running, and now had their trying out. Dick watched with interest to see what Phil would do with his three feet handicap, and was delighted to see his room-mate get off so sharply and take his heat so easily. The first semi-final the boy ran against Sands, and beat him without difficulty; the second he took from Jordan by a narrower margin. Only in the final heat did he fail, when Jones, a middler, took first, and Travers second, with Phil a poor third.

“Good work, Poole!” said MacRae, a middler rooming in the same entry, who was just coming out for the thousand yards. “I only ask to do as well.”

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But MacRae did better. He ran his race with twenty yards handicap, and finished first, close to the school record. The middlers grew enthusiastic.

"What a handicap!" said Dickinson reproachfully to Melvin, as he took his place on the scratch for the three hundred, and looked forward to the front man standing well around the curve. "I may as well not run."

"It's not too much for your best, old man," replied the manager, confidently. "You never know what you can do till you try."

Dickinson did not answer, for he was already on his mark with the tense, serious expression on his face which Dick liked to see. With the pistol report he was off, making a splendid start—which the manager, in a momentary flash of joy, contrasted with the hesitancy of the year before,—and whipping himself quickly into his stride. He passed Lord on the back stretch, Sandford on the straightaway at the end of the first lap, and then pushed for Von Gersdorf, who had made good use of his twenty yards start, and with his short stout legs flying under him, easily doubled

## THE SPRING RUNNING

the hard corners that delayed the pursuer. Von Gersdorf struck the final curve with Dickinson at his heels. On the curve short-legs gained. The two plunged into the final stretch with four yards of interval between them, short-legs panting ahead with quick staccato strokes, long-legs swinging again into the wide distance-devouring stride that looked as easy and natural as the piston motion of a fine engine, and yet was challenging muscle and nerve and heart to their utmost.

“Go it Gerty, go it!” shouted the middlers. “It’s yours!” Determined to hold his lead a second longer, Von Gersdorf dug his spikes into the soft board, made a final frantic spurt, and lifted his arms to meet the string with his breast — and found no string to meet. Dickinson had carried it away before him.

“What a race!” exclaimed Tompkins, as he sat with Varrell on the wall. “That’s what I call sport. I’d go miles to see that again!”

“What’s the time?” asked Curtis over the shoulders of the men who held the watches. “Beat it by two seconds? You don’t say so!

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and he pretended he couldn't do anything on this track!"

Melvin helped the runner up the bank to the gymnasium, and bothered himself with neither the record nor the race. "How is the ankle?" was his first anxious question. "Did you feel it?"

"Not a bit!" stammered Dickinson, between gasps. "But the corners—are terrible. They stopped me—every time."

The forty-five yard hurdles and the six-hundred yard run came next. Todd won the hurdles from scratch: the six hundred went to Cary, a middler, who ran a steady race from a good start, Dickinson this time succumbing to the corners and the handicap, and finishing third.

The scene now changed to the gymnasium, where the last three events were to come off. "You fellows want to do something," said Marks, coming over to the seat where Melvin, Varrell, and Curtis were sitting, ready for their events. "The middlers are beginning to crow already."

"It doesn't amount to anything," answered

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Curtis, with a little sniff of contempt. "Anybody can beat a scratch man, if you give him enough handicap."

"Of course," rejoined Marks; "but they always were a fool class. Some of their men have done pretty well, too. It's a bad thing for middlers to have a high opinion of themselves."

"It didn't hurt us last year," said Melvin.

The pole vault was started, and Varrell nerved himself for his first public appearance. He looked at no one, for he could feel that curious questions were running among the spectators, and he feared to surprise discouraging comments on tell-tale lips. As he faced the bar in the familiar position, this fear vanished. He took his run, stuck his pole firmly into the soft plank, rose with a fine nervous spring, and swung himself lightly over. Even as he dropped, his courage came again. Conscious that his form was undeniably good, and aglow with the sense of reserve force, he now faced the on-lookers squarely, amused as he caught, on this lip and on that, comments not meant for his hearing: "Not bad, after all." "Pretty, wasn't it?"

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"Corking good!" "Knows how, doesn't he?"  
"Too slick to last."

Others followed. The bar went up, nine feet, nine feet three. Varrell, who had three inches handicap, and Dearborn, scratch man, were now alone. Both men cleared nine feet six, which was four inches higher than Wrenn had ever reached. At nine seven he failed, and Dearborn just touched. The event was Varrell's on his handicap.

"Fine, Wrenn," said Melvin, giving his hand a good grip as he sat down. "Think of the little practice you've had compared with Dearborn. Your form was bully, too, and that's important for improvement in pole vaulting. Oh, we two may become great prize winners yet. Here goes for my exhibition."

He spoke with a smile on his lips, which made it clear that his last words were uttered in jest. Varrell looked after him rather enviously, as he took a few confident steps and went lightly over the bar at its first position. Melvin did not need to consider what the spectators might think of his audacity; nor to struggle to make a name

## THE SPRING RUNNING

for himself in school. A man with his athletic record and his rank and his general influence could afford to speak slightlyingly of a prize in a handicap meeting. To Varrell, who had hardly yet divested himself of the notion that he was still a stranger in the school, any prize that gave distinction would have been welcome. To win an important contest, to make a place for himself on some school team, to earn and wear a coveted "S," — all this was a part of an unconfessed ambition. So he envied Dick, not for the honors which he had won, but for the ability which had enabled him to win them.

The jump took its wearisome course. At five feet the contestants began to drop out. Benson, the scratch man, and Melvin were alone able to clear five feet three. Both went over at five four; then Melvin failed and Benson, with a jump two inches higher, won first place.

"Another middler victory!" growled Marks, whose class patriotism was strident.

"I should have won," said Dick, contentedly pulling on his sweater, "if I had taken the three inches they were going to give me. As Dickin-

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son and I did the handicapping, we didn't want to be charged with taking any unfair advantage, and so put ourselves down at scratch."

"That's well enough for Dickinson, but simply suicide for you. You're just learning and Benson's been at it ever since he's been in school."

"I should have liked to see him do six feet," said Melvin, calmly. Marks muttered something unintelligible, and turned to Curtis. "Don't you fail us anyway!"

Curtis nodded and grabbed the shot. His first put was close to the record, his second touched it, his third went ten inches beyond. That gave him a new record and the event, and put Marks again in good humor.

"John Curtis is the man for my money, as I've always said," he announced significantly to Melvin. "He never goes back on you."

"Didn't Varrell and Dickinson do the same?" asked Melvin, amused for the instant at the peculiar point of view of this non-athletic sport, who was always prating athletic nonsense, and swaggering as an expert.

"Ye-es," answered Marks, unwillingly; "but

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Dickinson balked in the six hundred. It's all due to his folly about the track ends; they wouldn't stop him if he wasn't afraid."

A look of indignation swept over Melvin's face. His lips parted to let out a savage retort, but he suddenly checked himself, gave a sniff of amused contempt, and replied good humoredly, "Really, Marks, you ought to write a book on athletics to leave to the school when we graduate."

And Marks went off, furious and voluble, to inform his listeners that Melvin's athletic successes had entirely turned his head; the fellow was really nothing but a big chump after all.

## CHAPTER XIV

### UNDER TWO FLAGS

FOR an hour or two after the meeting was over the elated middlers made a good deal of noise with their yells and their cheering, to which no one objected except those who happened to want to study at this ill-chosen hour. Later a few leading spirits cast about for some more striking mode of proving their importance than the threadbare and laborious fashion of cheers. The class flag which the seniors, following a precedent, had displayed on the Academy tower very early on Washington's birthday, had been seasonably and ignominiously removed by the conscientious boy who rang the Academy bell. The middlers concluded that the cleverest thing for them would be to hang their own class flag aloft on the day when the school was to break up for the spring recess,—the following Wednesday.

## UNDER TWO FLAGS

Boys are proverbially unskilled in keeping secrets. By Monday night the seniors knew of the middlers' plan. By Tuesday night the middlers knew of the seniors' plan, which was, of course, to anticipate their friends on Wednesday morning, and have the senior, not the middler banner, wave a farewell to the scattering school. The middlers then advanced the execution of their scheme several hours. Early Tuesday night instead of Wednesday morning, a daring middler, Tompkins by name, scaled the Academy roof, mounted the belfry, and fixed to the weather-vane the banner of his class. Then sliding down the lightning-rod again to the main roof of the building, he settled himself there for his hour's vigil.

Report of this forward movement of the enemy was brought to Sands's room early in the evening. He hastily summoned advisers; Melvin, Varrell, Curtis, Dickinson, Waters, Todd, and others whose names are not known to this story, gathered to his call.

Waters proposed to storm the watch immediately, change flags, and set a new guard. Melvin

## MAKING THE NINE

and Varrell objected vigorously to the plan as dangerous and foolhardy, and apparently were supported by the others. Dickinson then suggested that the wisest course would be to leave to the middlers their flag, their night-watch, and their victory.

"And have them gloat over us forever afterward?" said Sands. "Not on your life!"

"We should never hear the last of it," said Todd, wondering how a fellow could be cold-blooded enough to suggest such a course,—but Dickinson always had been queer.

Marks and Reynolds now joined the company, and heard a report of proceedings.

"I agree with Dickinson," said Melvin, renewing the discussion. "These class rows are dangerous things to start, for you can't tell what the end will be. If we take down the middlers' flag and put ours up, the middlers will set their hearts on getting back at us, and then the thing will seesaw back and forth until there's serious trouble. We had a good example of that last year when Martin and his gang stopped the car."

"If we let them get ahead of us in this,

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they'll be encouraged to try something else," remarked Curtis. "Hit 'em when you can, I say, only be sure you don't miss. It's worse to try and fail than not to try at all."

"And on the other hand," put in Varrell, quietly, "if you let them entirely alone and pay no attention at all to their doings, they will find no special credit in the thing. The easiest way to beat them is to let them alone."

"What a sandless lot!" exclaimed Marks, in disgust. "Why don't you come out square and say you're afraid to do it?"

"Shut up, Marks," ordered Sands, "or you'll get into trouble."

"A valiant man like Marks might do it alone," said Melvin, stretching himself as he rose to his feet. "I shouldn't think of interfering with his opportunity. Well, good night all; I'm going home to bed."

Varrell and Dickinson joined him at the door. Curtis started to follow, but a significant wink from Sands detained him. "Good night," he called after them, "I guess I won't go just yet."

Tompkins sat on the Academy roof, in coat

## MAKING THE NINE

and gloves, waiting and musing and shivering. The night was clear and moonless. The day had been warm; it was freezing again now. At eleven he heard below the welcome call of Benson, the relieving watch, and scuttled down to the ground as fast as his cold hands and stiff legs would allow. At twelve o'clock Bosworth took his turn. He got up with some difficulty, as he was little used to climbing, and pulled up after him by a string a voluminous ulster borrowed of a larger classmate, in which he rolled himself snugly, as he crouched at the base of the belfry where the lightning-rod reached up its side to the weather-vane above.

For a quarter of an hour complete silence reigned. Then the lone watcher became conscious of vague noises underneath, now at the side, now in front. With heart beating in quick heavy thumps, he freed himself from the ulster and crept around the belfry to the ridge-pole that ran toward the front of the building, and along this to the peak of the gable. Projecting his head carefully over, he heard voices, — at first indistinct, then somewhat clearer.



He heard voices.—at first indistinct, then somewhat clearer.—*Page 150.*



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Whatever the unknown persons were doing, they were very deliberate in their movements. Minutes had passed before he made out figures on the roof of the porch below. They waited here, and spent more time in muffled conversation, apparently discussing the method of scaling the wall above, which, as Bosworth said to himself reassuringly again and again as he clung shivering to the cold slates, was unscalable. At last the frost penetrated to his bones, making it obviously dangerous to lie longer in his cramped position. He was just about to grope his way back to his warm coat, when the figures on the porch began to be active again. He heard distinctly — it sounded like Curtis's voice — "I say we can't do it. We may as well go home as freeze here."

A few minutes later the speakers seemed to be on the ground again. Presently their voices were lost in the sound of feet treading carefully the board walk that led to the street. Soon these sounds, too, had died away, and absolute stillness reigned again.

Numb with cold Bosworth crept back to his

## MAKING THE NINE

nook, and wrapped himself once more in the great coat, which he found in a heap by the foot of the lightning-rod. He was puzzled at this, for he had a distinct impression of crawling out of the coat, as a worm out of a cocoon, and leaving it spread on the roof behind him.

"It's a vile job, anyway," he groaned, "and I was a fool to let them drag me into it. I shall freeze to death here."

But the hour was nearly over. He was just falling into a risky doze, when Dearborn's call came up from below, and presently Dearborn himself startled him by appearing suddenly at the edge of the roof.

"All right up here?" asked the newcomer.

"I suppose so," grumbled Bosworth, "if you can call it all right to have your legs and arms frozen off."

"Seen anything or heard anything?"

Bosworth hesitated. The instructions of the leaders had been definite, "Signal at the first suspicious sound!" When the voices aroused him, his first impulse had been to give the pre-concerted signal; but fear of being made the

## UNDER TWO FLAGS

centre of a scuffle on the roof, or of being compelled to hold the fort at the foot of the lightning-rod until classmates gathered to the rescue, had kept his lips sealed.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" snapped Dearborn. "Didn't you hear what I said? You act as if you were asleep."

"No, not a sound."

"It seems to take a long time to get it out."

Bosworth roused himself. "When you've been freezing as long as I have, you won't be so anxious to talk yourself."

"Give me the coat then," replied Dearborn, grabbing it without more ado. "You can have it in the morning. Now clear out and go to bed. This is the hour when they come, if they come at all."

So the watch changed hourly through the still, cold night. The last man aloft descended at six, just as the sun was peeping above the horizon. The cooks were already hard at work in the big kitchen of Carter Hall. Soon the boys who cared for the yard would be at their early tasks, and with the dormitories gradually

## MAKING THE NINE

waking it was no longer advisable to maintain the sentinel on the roof. Halfway between the Academy and Carter, the retiring guard met his two successors, who were to continue the watch between six and seven from the concealment of the gymnasium porch. Together the three looked proudly up at the bunch of white that hung limp between the east and north arms of the Academy weather-vane.

"There she is all right," said Strout. "With the first puff of wind she'll blow out and show herself."

At seven the watch was over — the last watch. Not a senior had appeared. The middlers break-fasted early, then hung round the steps of Carter, waiting for the chapel bell.

"It's coming!" cried Dearborn, holding up his finger in joyful anticipation. "And at the right time, too! See the tree-tops bend!"

Just as the dismal clang of the bell sounded out its first summons, when the boys, slowly sauntering forth from dormitory entries, were lazily reckoning up the minutes of liberty left to them before the final fatal stroke should cut

## UNDER TWO FLAGS

off their entrance into chapel, the breeze struck the weather-vane, filled out the folds of the flag, and set it flapping vigorously.

“Three long ‘Seatons’ for the middle class!” shouted Strout, leaping out from the waiting group with cap in hand. “Make it good now, one, two, three—”

A groan from behind stopped him suddenly. The breeze had strengthened; the white flag was exposed in its full length and breadth; and it bore the numerals not of the middle, but of the senior class!

“Some mistake about that flag, isn’t there, Strout?” rang out Curtis’s voice from the steps. “You must have got a blind man to put that up.”

Strout returned neither look nor word, but he collared every sentinel before the first recitation and cross-examined him thoroughly. Every one, including Bosworth, swore that he had watched honestly and intently at the lightning-rod beside the belfry during his whole hour, and had heard nothing. Every one, except Bosworth, told the truth.

## CHAPTER XV

### ABOUT MANY THINGS

“Who did it, Dick?” asked Phil, later in the day, when the flag had been taken down, good-bys said, and the dormitories, emptied of those who were fortunate enough to be within easy distance of home, had ceased to resemble an ant-hill in its busy season.

“I don’t know,” replied Dick. “I can guess, and that’s all.”

“The fellows say Curtis and Sands were at the bottom of it. It seems rather silly business for such big fellows, doesn’t it?”

Dick laughed. Two seasons of rubbing against the varieties of Seaton life had not shaken Poole’s respect for proprieties or affected his natural dignity.

“What a venerable person you are! Sometimes you seem the oldest of us all. How old are you, anyway?”

## ABOUT MANY THINGS

"I'm fifteen and a half," replied Poole. "I wish I seemed old to Sands," he added mournfully. "Perhaps he'd give me a little better show if I did. He always acts as if I were a child."

"Never mind how he acts," said Melvin. "Make him take you whether he wants to or not. Study your game, and hang on till the last gun is fired."

"I can't very well hang on after he's kicked me off," said Phil, with a melancholy smile.

"Has he done that?"

"Not yet; it may be coming, though, when practice begins after vacation. The Coach will be here then."

The senior leaned back in his desk chair with hands clasped behind his head, and gazed long and vacantly out of the window at the bare limbs and solid gray-brown trunks that lined the distant street. "You'll make it sometime, I'm sure, Phil, for I think you have it in you; and if you want it hard enough, you'll put it through. The only question in my mind is whether it will come this year or later. You have to get a start, and the start often depends

## MAKING THE NINE

on luck. I got on the football team the first year through a lucky chance."

"You had something better than luck to help you," rejoined Phil. "You had ability and brains."

"Luck and energy were all I had to start with," returned Dick, modestly. "The ability came gradually from experience, and I don't think I used my brains until I took up kicking."

Both were silent for a time, each intent on his own thoughts. Then the older boy began again.

"Look here, Phil, I'll tell you something that I'm beginning to get hold of which isn't to be got from any book, and yet is a fundamental principle of athletics. In every exercise that requires a skilled motion or great speed, you'll find that there's a peculiar kind of final snap or twist that gives the motion or the speed; and you've got to master this if you want the highest results. Without it a strong man is powerless, and with it a weak man often slips to the front. In punting it's the final jerk of the knee which I had so much trouble in learning — don't worry, I'm not going to begin on that again.

## ABOUT MANY THINGS

In golf it's a snap of the wrist; in shot-putting, of the arm and shoulder; in pole vaulting of the waist and arms,—and so on through the list. In gymnasium feats the same principle works. Just watch Guy Morgan when he does the 'giant swing' on the horizontal bar, and you'll see that he gives a sudden jerk with his shoulders when he's about three-quarters round, that carries him up to the top of the swing like a hawk rising at the end of a swoop. Now in baseball, I believe, that snap is hidden somewhere in every good throw and in every straight swing of the bat. Discover it and master it, and you won't need to worry about making the school nine."

"I suppose that explains how some of these fine hitters seem to strike easily and yet make the ball fly," remarked Phil.

"Can't you get a lot of batting practice this vacation, and so start in a little ahead when the others get back? I'll pitch for you, if you want me to; it will be good exercise."

Phil smiled: "I'm afraid you wouldn't be of much use. I ought to have some one who really knows how to pitch."

## MAKING THE NINE

"That's a fact," rejoined Melvin, "and I can't pitch at all. Couldn't we scare up some one?"

"Did you ever hear of a man named Rowley, who used to play professional ball? He works in one of the factories now. I believe he was something of a pitcher before he broke down. Why shouldn't I be able to get him to pitch for me?"

"Just the man!" cried Dick, briskly. "Let's hunt him up right off."

The boys finally succeeded in locating the residence of the Rowley family, and caught their man smoking his after-supper pipe before the door. He was a sallow person, with a goodly length of arms and legs strung to a lanky body by stout muscle-covered joints.

"Are you Mr. Jack Rowley, the ball-player?" asked Phil.

The man removed the pipe from his mouth and looked at the boys with interest. He admitted that he was Jack Rowley, but denied being a ball-player. He had been once, but wasn't any longer.

## ABOUT MANY THINGS

"You could still pitch a little, couldn't you?" asked Dick.

"A couple of innings, perhaps," answered Rowley, "but I'm not up to a game. I've been out of it these three years. What d'ye want of me?"

"I want some practice in batting," said Phil, "and I thought I might be able to get you to pitch for me half an hour a day for the next week."

Rowley shook his head. "I'm in the mill all day from seven till six, except for the hour's nooning, which I want to myself and to eat my dinner in peace and quiet."

"How about after supper?" questioned Phil.

"It's dark after supper," grumbled Rowley, through the pipe-stem.

Phil looked at Dick in discouragement. Suddenly his face lighted up. "Why not before breakfast?" he said; "say from six to half-past? It's only for a week, and I'll pay you anything that's reasonable."

"Will you buy me a new arm to pitch with?" asked Rowley, with a rueful grin. "Mine is all wrenched to pieces with them cussed drops."

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"Isn't there enough of it left to give this boy a week's batting practice?" asked Melvin, anxious to secure the opportunity. "I'll shack the balls."

"There mightn't be many to shack," said Rowley, with a gleam of fun in his eyes.

He pondered some time, puffing vigorously, and shooting an occasional side glance at the waiting boy. "Well, I'll try it once," he said finally, "but mind ye, if me arm hurts, I'll not do it, no, —not for ten dollars an hour. I was laid up a year with it once, and that's enough for me."

The boys had to turn out early next morning to keep their appointment at the practice ground, and they more than half expected to find that they alone kept it. But Rowley was there. He received them as before, with his pipe between his lips, but after a few throws into the net, he put the pipe away. As he warmed up, his thoughts returned to old channels, and with his shoots and drops he interlarded anecdotes of games and bits of shrewd counsel. He was unquestionably wild that first morning, and Phil's practice was rather in waiting and dodg-

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ing and facing courageously, than in picking out good balls.

"I'll steady down in a day or two," he said, as he pulled on his coat at the end of the half hour. So the boys knew that he had not thrown up the job.

The next day the pitching was better and the batting worse. It was not so easy to watch the ball when it took such sudden unexpected dives! Still Phil occasionally met them fairly, and each square hit gave him courage to wait for another. After a time Jack suggested trying bunts. "It's a great thing for a left-hander to be able to bunt," he said. "He has twice the chance to make first on one that a right-hander has." And Phil tried this, too, with questionable success.

Day followed day and Rowley improved more than Phil, so that the progress of the latter did not show itself. "I'd like to have you for a month," said the pitcher, as they settled their account at the end of the week. "I could teach you to bunt in a few lessons, and it's a great thing to be a good bunter."

Phil laughed. "You've said that fifty times.

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I want to be able to do something besides bunt. All the same, I'd like to have you pitch for me once or twice a week, Rowley. Can you do it?"

"Sure," said Rowley, "but take my advice and learn to bunt."

The boys came trooping back for the final stretch of the year. The baseball candidate went to work out-of-doors. As the field was still soft, the out-fielders had for the first time the chief attention of coach and captain; and Phil was sent chasing flies and long hits with the rest. He fared as well as the others perhaps, though his "eye" was not yet to be trusted, and he was nervous with an intense desire to do well. They all came up for batting practice later on, and Phil found the pitcher rather an easy mark after facing Rowley. He cracked out several easy chances in what seemed to him a thorough sort of way, but, to his disappointment, neither Sands nor Coach Lyford appeared to notice them.

That same day Melvin and Varrell walked down from their first out-door practice together.

"How about the safe robbery, Wrenn?" said

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Melvin, peering laughingly into his companion's face. "It seems to me I haven't heard much about that of late. Given it up as a bad job, haven't you?"

"No, I haven't," replied Varrell, composedly. "I'm just waiting."

"It's easy enough to wait; I could do that myself. I thought you were going to do something."

"I have done one thing," rejoined the imperturbable Wrenn.

"What?"

"I've proved that the passage door can be opened by prying with the ice chipper."

"How?"

"By opening the door with it myself. You know that room wasn't meant for a permanent office when it was first enclosed. The whole partition is more or less shaky."

"I don't see that that helps you much. You have no evidence against any particular person."

"The evidence will come in time. That's what I'm waiting for."

"Where from, I'd like to know?"

"Perhaps from Eddy. He must know more

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than he's told. He certainly lied to Grim and Moore."

"I don't believe Bosworth would trust anything to a little fool like him," said Dick. "Eddy apparently told Bosworth the combination and then, when the news of the robbery came out, was too scared to acknowledge it. Having once lied, he would stick to it, because to such a little morally flabby idiot it would seem the easiest course."

"And even if he confessed, it wouldn't help matters," went on Varrell, following out the argument, "for Bosworth would deny that he had paid any attention to what Eddy said, and there would be the end of it. No, we've got to get the information from Bosworth himself."

"Are you going to tackle him with it outright?" demanded Dick, perplexed.

Varrell snorted in disgust.

"What a question! Of course I'm not. I'm going to wait, as I said before. This Bosworth lives in Cambridge. His mother keeps a boarding-house for students. He's been thrown with these fellows, some of them probably fast

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men with plenty of money, who have patronized him and unintentionally filled his head with all sorts of wrong ideas. He's learned to play poker and like fine clothes and spend money on himself and feel that to have money is to be happy and to be without it is to be wretched. Whatever he had left from the plunder of the safe he probably spent during the vacation. He told Marks of several things he'd done that must have taken money,— and he'll soon be in need of more. This is an expensive term for those of us who have good allowances, with subscription duns and summer clothes to buy and all sorts of temptations to spend money. It will be harder for him, as he'll come back without much cash, and will want to guzzle soda-water, and smoke, and perhaps try to worm himself into some society. I know such a fellow like a book. He's got to have money, and he'll get it dishonestly if he can't honestly. His success with the safe will encourage him to something else."

"To what?" asked Dick.

"How do I know? That's what I'm waiting to see."

## CHAPTER XVI

### PHIL MAKES HIS DÉBUT

“ONE strike!” called the umpire. Phil gripped the bat and waited. It was the first practice game, the scrub against the school. Phil had been put at left-field on the scrub; and he was now at bat nervously conscious that it was his first real trial, perhaps his only one, and that Sands was waiting for the pretext to fire him with the first batch of disappointed candidates. Tompkins was also on trial, and while he rubbed the damp ball into a state to grip decently for the next pitch, he considered whether he could afford to give the youngster an easy one to help him out, without interfering with his own reputation. Then he caught Sands’s signal as the crouching catcher wagged his hand between his knees, and answered it with an in-curve. No, there was no place in

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the Seaton game for favoritism. The boy must take his chance.

Phil's bat came almost to the plate, but he stopped it short at the first veer of the ball. He had learned from Wallace to watch the ball, but it was Rowley who had taught him to detect the first sign of the veer.

“One ball!” shouted the umpire.

The next one was an out meant to swing over the plate. It swung too far, and Phil had to dodge to save himself, but he did it easily, stepping back just far enough to avoid the ball. There was no sign of fear in the movement.

“Hang a left-hander!” muttered Tompkins; and sent a straight ball over the corner of the plate a little below the shoulder.

With the instinct of a real ball-player Phil knew his ball and met it squarely, dropped the bat and scampered for first. He perceived as he ran that the second baseman jumped for it and missed it, and a moment later as he touched first he saw the centre-fielder stoop and then turn and run. He did not need the coacher's advice to go down. By the time the centre-

## MAKING THE NINE

fielder got his hands on the ball, the runner was already beyond second; he slid to third with a fine dive, the prettiness of which was not spoiled by the fact that the slide was wholly unnecessary. At third he waited while the three men who followed him at bat went out in quick succession, two as victims of strikes, tempted to hit at balls they didn't want, and one on a pop fly.

Sands threw down his mask and protector and joined the coach.

"That hit of Poole's was the second made off Tompkins in five innings," said the coach. "A pretty hit and a good slide. Too bad he's so young, for he seems about the only man on your scrub team who stands up to the plate and keeps his head. He's been up twice: the first time he got his base on balls; the second he made a hit."

"He's doing better than I expected," said Sands. "Probably it's his lucky day; but he's too light and too green for us. He'll make good material for about two years from now. We must have steady men for the Hillbury

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game or they'll go to pieces. The strain's terrific."

"He's had two fielding chances with one error," said the coach, consulting his record. "Oh, yes, I remember; the error was on a long hit close by the foul line, but he got it back well to the in-field."

In the sixth inning Robinson, second baseman on the first team, led off with a single over third. Maine, who was being tried at short, followed with a hot grounder to right-field, which the scrub-fielder let bounce past him, allowing the batsman to reach second and advancing Robinson to third; and Sands followed with a liner over the short-stop's head that set the runners moving again. By some unaccountable instinct—he certainly had not seen enough of Sands's playing to know the general direction of his hits—Phil had moved up toward the in-field. Suddenly he heard the crack of the bat, and saw the ball shooting straight toward him, apparently likely to strike a dozen yards ahead. Impulse drove him forward to meet it; intelligence, with tardier admonition, held him

## MAKING THE NINE

back. So he took a step forward, then several back, and just reached the ball as it skimmed above his head, and pulled it down.

It was a creditable catch, but more creditable still was the unhesitating, accurate throw to Rhines at third to cut off Robinson, who had started for home; for it was proof that the boy could think quickly and take advantage of the chances of the game.

Whatever the merit of quick thought, Rhines evidently lacked it; for he stupidly held the ball on third, without perceiving that the other base runner was thirty feet from second, and might have been caught equally well. Smith, who was pitching, finally made it clear to him with expletives and yells, but the opportunity for the triple play had passed. Vincent went out on a pop fly to the pitcher, and the scrub came in triumphant.

The coach made another mental note in Phil's favor. A catch may be by chance, a double play never. It was no great feat, but the boy could use his brains; that was worth remembering.

Phil's side went out readily enough, one hit-

## PHIL MAKES HIS DÉBUT

ting to pitcher, one on a little fly to second, one on strikes. The first followed in similar fashion, and the scrub in their turn advanced no farther than second. It was still early in the season, and schoolboys are likely to be poor batters. The pitchers were the only men who had had any regular practice for their positions. Then with the return of the first to bat, came a set of in-field fumbles and wild throws, and general heedless passing of the ball around the diamond, that set the first to running recklessly, and drove the scrub to wilder errors. Such practice is as vicious for base runners and coachers as for fielders.

“Stop, stop!” cried Lyford, running out into the diamond. The scrub short-stop had fumbled a grounder, and then after juggling the ball a second had thrown to first when it was quite impossible to catch the man; the first baseman had put it frantically across the diamond to Rhines six feet off the base, in a wild attempt to catch a runner at third; and Rhines had made haste to contribute his part to the general demoralization by throwing several feet over the

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second baseman's head, in an equally hopeless effort to intercept the man speeding down to second.

"Give that ball to the pitcher," shouted the coach, as the ball finally came back from the distant out-field, "and don't do any more of this reckless tossing round the diamond. Until you can throw the ball straight, don't throw it; and never throw unless you know what you're trying to do."

The scrub steadied down and put three men out,—two, including Taylor the left-fielder, being struck out by Smith, and the other sending an easy fly to the centre-field. Rhines then made a hit for the scrub, stole second, and was pushed on to third by an out. Newcomb sent an easy fly to Taylor, and Phil came up to bat with two men out and Rhines on third. This time Tompkins had no question as to the youngster. Phil struck once, had two balls and a strike called on him, and then, just holding the bat to meet the ball, and drawing it a little back rather than striking, dropped a pretty bunt near the sidelines, between third and home, and easily beat

## PHIL MAKES HIS DÉBUT

the ball to first. With Rhines on third, the boy stole second without fear; and then as Smith sent a bounder to right-field, he was off with the sharp start, rounded third at full speed, and came racing over the plate just before the ball reached the catcher's hands. An easy strike out sent the scrub for the last time into the field.

Phil ran out to his place with a heart throbbing with joyful exhilaration. He had reached first every time he had come to bat,—once on balls, once on a genuine hit, once on a successful bunt. His fielding chances had been at least decently good. He had caught two flies, made one assist, and there was but one error against him. There was certainly nothing here to be ashamed of.

The first of the school batters went out on an easy in-field fly; the second reached first safely through an error by the fumbling short; the third got his base on balls; and the fourth hit to centre-field, filling the bases. Phil pulled his cap down tight over his head, blew on his fingers to keep them warm, and pondered what

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he should do with the ball if a fly came into his hands.

Tompkins came up to the plate. "Line it out, Tommy!" cried Sands. "A hit means two runs, a two bagger, three!"

One ball! One strike! Tompkins set his teeth and smashed at what he thought to be his chance. He hit hard, but he hit a trifle under, and the ball went up, up, up, going, it seemed to Phil, as if it never would stop. The short-stop staggered back with his eyes on the ball, but it was out of reach behind him.

"I'll take it!" shouted Phil. He ran hard forward; then looked up and waited. How it wabbled! How it swung! How it changed its size in the air! He cleared his eyes with a wink; the next instant the ball was in his hands.

A moment only he staggered for better footing; then as he saw the runner cut loose from third and dash for the home, he set himself for a throw. The catcher stood on the plate and waited dutifully but hopelessly, ready to leap to either side for the wild throw from the

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field. To his surprise he did not need to stir from his tracks. The ball came directly toward him,—a long straight line throw,—made an easy bound, and landed in his hands just as the runner came within reach.

“Out!” cried the umpire. “By a mile,” added Tompkins under his breath. “Bully for the kid! That’s a throw a professional wouldn’t be ashamed of.”

During the last half of the ninth, Phil sat on the bench enjoying the compliments of his associates, and cared not a whit whether the scrub batters reached first or not. As a matter of fact, they went out as quickly and easily as three timid batters could go; and Phil, his ears tingling with a commendation from Sands, and a warning from the coach as to taking care of himself after the game, that was more delightfully significant than the captain’s good word, trotted gayly down to the gymnasium for his bath and rub-down and a change of clothes.

Half an hour later he rushed in on Melvin, who had just come in from a trip up the river in Varrell’s canoe.

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“What luck, Phil?”

“Luck indeed! Nothing but luck! I helped in two double plays, caught two flies, made two hits and only one error. Lyford was cordial, and even Sands gave me a compliment.”

“That *is* a record. You remember what I said about my getting a start by luck; you’ve beaten me in luck, anyway.”

The boy’s face fell. “But you got on the team and I shan’t, that’s the difference. Sands thinks I’m too young, and it will make no difference whether I play well or not, he won’t take me on.”

“Has he told you so?”

“No, but I suspect it, and I’m pretty sure I’m right.”

“Nonsense,” said Melvin. “He’ll take you if you’re the best man, or I don’t know Sands. Only bear in mind that you’ve had a lucky day, and the first practice game isn’t enough to prove anything. You’ve won the first heat, but don’t get a swelled head over it, or you’ll win no more.”

At the same time Sands and Coach Lyford

## PHIL MAKES HIS DÉBUT

were lingering on the gymnasium steps, in the midst of a conversation on the very same subject.

"The little chap did well," Sands was saying; "I don't dispute that. He's a clever little player. What we want is a *big* player, a hard, experienced, steady man who can swat the ball for two or three bases when he hits it, and can stand the strain of the season without going up in the air."

"I'd rather have a man that can hit often than one who sometimes hits hard," replied the coach; "and as for throwing, give me brains and skill rather than muscle behind a ball any time. There is good baseball in the boy, and you ought not to discourage him. I don't ask you to put him on the team; keep him as substitute if you wish, but watch him and help him and see what you can make of him."

So it happened that Phil was retained as substitute when the great majority of the candidates were dropped. Some said he ought to be on the team, some that it was gross favoritism not to fire him with the rest; but Phil himself

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was content to sit and watch, and do what he was told, and play when he had a chance with all the earnestness and strength and skill he had. And twice a week he turned out early for the six o'clock practice with Rowley.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A NOCTURNAL MYSTERY

FOR weeks Phil sat on the bench, a perpetual substitute, getting plenty of practice on practice days in all sorts of positions where he was useful, but always seeing others go into the game. The fielders that year were a remarkably healthy lot; they played game after game without accident or illness. Taylor, whose position at left-field Phil coveted, was playing his second year on the team, and felt his importance as a veteran who had already been tested under fire in a Hillbury game. He had the name of being a great hitter, and though his work during the season so far had not borne out this reputation, he occasionally made long drives that delighted the great mass of student supporters whose admiration is as intense as it is fitful. He was a safe catch on flies, and now and then did

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spectacular feats that had the same effect on the spectators as the occasional three-baggers. He had also acquired a striking way of opening his hands for the ball, which his admirers called an "awfully graceful catch"; and he took much apparent satisfaction in his general bearing and clothes. The other fielders, Vincent at right and Sudbury at centre, were steady, hard-working fellows, who did their duty at bat and in the field to the best of their ability, and did not know or care whether any one looked at them or not.

Curtis sat watching the play one Saturday afternoon, with Marks on the seat beside him emitting deep gulps of cigarette smoke and the usual unbroken stream of baseball chatter. It was a game with a team from one of the smaller colleges, which had defeated Hillbury eight to four and was now threatening to shut Seaton out altogether.

"What a fool that Taylor is!" said Curtis. "He's just struck out again, and now pretends the umpire is unfair! That's to save his face. I wonder why Sands doesn't try some other man."

"Some other man!" cried Marks, for a brief

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instant speechless with astonishment. "Why, he made a home run in the Colby game, and he's about the prettiest fielder on the team."

"Oh, yes; he's pretty enough," returned Curtis, "and knows it, too, but I'd have some other quality than prettiness on the field if the team were mine."

"Well, he gets the balls,—that's the main thing," said Marks. "You'll find few errors against his name."

"Do you know why?" returned Curtis. "He never tries for a ball unless he's sure he can get it. It's easy enough to get a fielding record when you never take any hard chances."

"But he does," insisted Marks. "Don't you remember the long running catch he made in the Musgrove School game?"

"Yes, I do," replied Curtis; "and he held the ball, admiring himself, for four seconds afterward and let the man on third walk home."

"You're down on him," said Marks, not knowing what else to reply.

Curtis sniffed. "Down on him! Well, perhaps I am. Perhaps it would be better if he

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were down on himself. When I see him try hard for balls that he can't get, or make some good long throws right when they're needed, or slide hard to bases, or make a good sacrifice hit, then I'll change my opinion."

"Tompkins has improved, hasn't he?" said Marks, suddenly changing to a fresh subject. John Curtis was not an agreeable person to argue with, for he held his opinions tenaciously and had unpleasant things to say to those who held opposing views; and Marks, who argued on athletics in a very fluent and confident style when he had laymen like himself to deal with, felt a little shy before a real athlete, even though the sport under discussion was not that in which the athlete excelled.

"That's right," replied Curtis, "no great genius with curves, I judge, but he has good control and uses his head. The difficulty with him is that he's a fool, too."

Marks looked curiously into the football player's face.

"Apparently every one's a fool to-day,—every one, I suppose, but John Curtis."

## A NOCTURNAL MYSTERY

"We'll except present company,— for the sake of politeness," responded Curtis, with a malicious smile hovering about his lips. Marks always bored him. "Tompkins is a fool, but not of the silly, show-off kind like Taylor. He's got the stuff in him to make a good pitcher and a chance to distinguish himself by winning the Hillbury game ; but he doesn't care a rap whether he pitches or not, and he doesn't behave himself as he ought."

"I don't understand that. He seems very regular in his training and practice. He always works hard out here, I'm sure."

"Oh, I don't mean that," Curtis made haste to reply. "Tommy is straight; he'll do what he agrees to,— a good deal better than your friend Taylor. The trouble with Tommy is that he's always trying fool tricks, like a small boy in a grammar school. Some day he'll go too far, and then there'll be an end of Tommy. Sands ought to sit on him."

"Sands tries to, but it doesn't do any good," replied Marks. "He doesn't care for Sands."

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"Isn't there some one he does care for?" asked Curtis.

"The only fellow he seems to think anything of is Melvin, the truly good," answered Marks, with a sneer. "No one else has any influence over him, and I doubt if Melvin can make any impression on him. Tommy is altogether too nutty."

That night Curtis and Sands appeared at Melvin's room with serious faces. Dick heard their tale in silence.

"I'll tell you what I should do," he said at length. "I'd give him a good warning and then I'd fill his place, pitcher or no pitcher. If he can't keep out of scrapes, he's bound to go sooner or later; and if he's surely going, the longer you wait the worse it will be. No fellow who won't take responsibility or won't keep training belongs on a Seaton team, anyway."

Sands shook his head dolefully. "That's all very well in theory, but you can't make pitchers to order, and Tommy is our only good one. He works hard, too, uses his head well and improves

## A NOCTURNAL MYSTERY

right along. If he could only be kept out of mischief, I couldn't ask for a better man."

"And we thought you might have some influence with him," said Curtis, coming in his usual fashion directly to the point. "Won't you tackle him, and see if you can't get some sense into his head?"

"I'll see what I can do," replied Melvin, "but I don't think it pays to plead with people. It gives them the swelled head."

The two visitors departed and Melvin buried himself in his books. Soon, however, he was interrupted again, this time by a very faint and timid knock.

"Hello, Littlefield," he called to the slender, pale-faced boy, a year or two younger than Phil, who slipped in and closed the door carefully behind him. "Anything wrong?"

"They were at it again last night," said the boy, with a look in which shame and fear were curiously blended. "They couldn't get in because I had fixed the window so it couldn't be opened enough to let any one in; but they banged something against the outside that

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frightened me pretty badly for a few minutes."

"Did you go to sleep again?"

"Yes, after a while. I heard the clock strike two and three."

"That's better than you did the first time you were disturbed."

"Oh, yes; the time the fellow stuck his head in at midnight and gave that unearthly yell, I had a terrible shock. I don't think I slept a wink that night."

"I wish we knew when these visitors were likely to appear again," said Dick, thoughtfully. "We might have some fun ourselves."

"I think they are coming to-night," said Littlefield.

"What makes you think so?"

"The stick I fixed to lock my window is gone; it held the sashes just the right distance apart. That's not much of a reason, I know, but I have a feeling that they will come to-night."

"What makes you think it is 'they'?" asked the senior.

"I don't. I say 'they,' but it may be only one."

## A NOCTURNAL MYSTERY

“I’m inclined to think it’s one. Whoever it is, he comes on that projecting ledge, and there’s barely room on it for one. Don’t you want to swap rooms with me to-night? You take my bed, and I’ll try yours.”

A look of delight flashed suddenly upon the boy’s face. “And let them find you instead of me! They won’t like that! What shall you do if they come?”

“I’ll wait and see,” said Melvin.

“Perhaps you won’t mind it,” said the boy, with the worried expression coming back into his eyes. “If I were stronger, I suppose I shouldn’t. But it isn’t pleasant to wake up suddenly and hear some one trying to open your window, or feel in the darkness that there may be a person in the room. It spoils your sleep, and makes you so nervous you can’t do any good work. And yet I know it’s a kind of a joke, and I ought not to let it worry me.”

“A mighty poor joke!” said Phil, who had come in during the conversation. “A good ducking in Salt River would be the proper price

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for such fun! Why don't you set a steel trap and catch him like any other rat?"

"Let's try my scheme first," said Melvin. "When you're ready, Littlefield, come in and take my bed. I shan't turn in for an hour yet."



The Academy through the trees.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### A SPILLED PITCHER

LITTLEFIELD crept into Melvin's bed that night with a sense of security that he had not felt for weeks, and was soon in a deep, restful sleep. Melvin undressed in his own room, and then slipped across the hall in pajamas to the little Prep's room, turned on the electric light, and surveyed the field. His first act was to clear away the lighter furniture, so as to leave an open space about the window at which the disturbance was wont to occur. Then he filled two pitchers with water and placed them in convenient positions, one close to the corner of the bed, the other against the wall opposite. When this was done, he adjusted the window-sashes after the usual arrangement, and at the top of the lower sash, in the corner nearest the bed, fastened a nail. To this he attached one end of a string,

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and taking the other end with him as he jumped into bed, he drew it tight and tied it to his finger.

“Now if I can only keep my hand quiet,” he thought as he lay down, “any movement of the window ought to rouse me; but I suppose I shall begin to roll as soon as I am asleep, and get the string loose, or wake myself a dozen times for nothing. I’ll give it a trial, anyway.”

Healthy and unworried, Dick fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. In his sleep he turned slightly in bed and threw one arm above his head, so that the pressure of the cord on his finger made itself felt. The pressure occasioned a dream, and the dream at length brought him back to consciousness. He seemed to be struggling vainly to free himself from one of the gymnasium rings, to which he was hanging by a single finger. He squirmed and twisted and strove to cast it off, but despite his struggles the ring still clung to the finger, and the finger still clutched the ring. He awoke with a frightened start, relieved to discover that he was free from the ugly predicament, yet still under the

## A SPILLED PITCHER

spell of the vague terror of the vision. With quickened breath and straining ears, he listened to make sure there was no other reason for his waking. Except for the distant, labored puffing of a night freight, as it worked its way through the edge of the town, the silence was absolute.

Muttering reproaches to himself for the undefined dread that crept into his heart as he felt the depressing influence of the darkness and quiet, and the solitary waiting for an unknown assailant, he turned over and settled himself once more in a comfortable position for sleeping. The rumbling of the ponderous train died gradually away in the distance, leaving a stillness unnatural and oppressive.

"I don't wonder that the little chap's nerves are unstrung," thought Dick. "I can feel my heart throb all over my body."

The watcher's nervous tension gradually slackened, and he was just falling into a doze, when the scrape of a rubber sole on a stone surface brought him instantly to attention, as the nodding fisherman starts with the first tug at his line. The sound came clear in the dead silence,

## MAKING THE NINE

repeated at close intervals as the mysterious visitor crept along the ledge, setting foot after foot slowly and carefully in place.

At the first distinct noise Melvin had lifted himself upright in bed and listened intently and fearfully, with his heart madly thumping. Then as the steps drew nearer, and he realized that the opportunity which he had longed for was really to be granted, that the perpetrator of the crazy night pranks would soon be delivered into his hand, the uncanny spell of the night was instantly broken. Throwing off the useless noose from his finger, he slipped out of bed, and took his stand close to the wall beside the window.

It was a moonless night of flying clouds, and Melvin, peeping round the window casing, could barely distinguish the vague outline of the man outside, who, clinging to the window stops, was now trying to raise the lower sash.

“I’ll bet I know you, you lunatic!” thought Melvin, drawing back as the sash slowly lifted. “We’ll see who has the fun out of this night’s adventure.”

## A SPILLED PITCHER

The visitor now had the window high enough to admit his head and shoulders; Melvin could hear the shirt scrape against the bottom of the sash as the intruder worked himself cautiously in. From this sound, as well as the noise of breathing, the waiting senior knew that his quarry was within the room as far as the waist. Was this the time to strike? Would the fellow come in still farther, or merely yell and withdraw beyond reach? In a flash Dick considered the question and came to his decision.

The intruder paused, listening for a sound from the bed. Then Dick heard the drawing of a long deep breath, and knew what it meant. A groan, awesome and sepulchral, broke the nocturnal stillness, then suddenly choked and ended in a gasp. Two strong arms caught the prowler's waist like the jaws of a steel trap, and jerked the floundering legs through the window into the room.

Both went down together to the floor, when with the recollection that the owner of the room could not really be a very powerful adversary, the intruder recovered his presence of mind and

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fighting spirit. Sure of his prey, Dick let himself be rolled toward the side of the room where one of the pitchers stood; then with a quick wrestler's turn he twisted himself on top, found the pitcher and emptied it on his enemy's head.

While the prostrate boy gulped and sputtered and coughed, Melvin freed himself and groped his way to the electric light.

"I thought so," he said coolly, as the light flashed upon Tompkins's dripping head and the pool on the floor. "Come, my wild Western Injun, Brave-Man-not-afraid-of-the-Dark, who makes a specialty of frightening little boys! Take that towel and help mop up this water."

They worked for a few minutes without a word. When the task was finished, Melvin tossed Tompkins a steamer rug from Littlefield's sofa, and pointed to a chair.

"Wrap yourself up and sit down. This thing has got to be straightened out before we part. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing." Tompkins spoke for the first time.

## A SPILLED PITCHER

“Great sport, isn’t it, to scare a timid little chap into brain fever! I always thought you were half fool, but I never knew before that you were such a coward.”

“I’m not a coward!” retorted Tompkins, aroused. “I didn’t mean to hurt the boy, I was just having a little fun.”

“Why didn’t you try it on me then, or some other fellow of your size?”

“It wouldn’t have been any fun.”

“And for the sake of your amusement you keep Littlefield in fear of his life for weeks. If that isn’t cowardly, what is it?”

“It’s selfish, I admit,” said Tompkins, soberly, “and mean, but not cowardly.”

“Call it selfish and mean, then,” continued Melvin, “if you prefer. Here you are chosen by the school to be pitcher on the nine, a position of honor and responsibility, and you behave like a monkey, doing all sorts of fool tricks, any one of which the Faculty would think ample reason for firing you. What do you call that? It seems to me like a breach of trust.”

“I don’t know,” answered the culprit.

## MAKING THE NINE

"It's just as if some one were to give you a thousand dollars to keep for him and you agreed to take care of it, and then spent it for your amusement."

To this Tompkins said nothing at all. The senior paused a minute for a reply, and then continued : "And the worst thing about you is that you have no sense or conscience and never will have any. You aren't bad ; you're just childish and selfish. But you have apparently set your heart on getting expelled, and your best friend can't stop you. It's really foolish in me to stand here talking to you at two o'clock in the morning. You can't reform, or if you can, you won't."

With disgust stamped on every feature, Melvin turned to look at his watch. When he raised his eyes again, Tompkins was on his feet.

"Yes, I'm a fool, Dick Melvin, I don't deny it ; but I'm not a hopeless case. I can't become a school balance wheel like you, but you won't catch me in another scrape this year."

"Do you mean it ?" demanded the senior, with a sharp glance at the speaker's face.

## A SPILLED PITCHER

"I do. I'll make it right with Littlefield,— and you see if I get into trouble again."

Dick held out his hand, and gave the other a cordial clasp, but all he said was: "Clear out, then, and let me go to sleep. I'll believe in the reform when I see it."

Next morning Melvin waked to find Littlefield standing at his bedside.

"Come, get up," said the boy, with a grin, "it's only ten minutes to breakfast. What did you do with the water pitchers?"

On his way to chapel half an hour later Melvin suddenly felt Varrell's grip on his arm.

"Well, Dick, it has happened!"

"What?"

"The thing that I said would happen. The stealing has begun again. Some one has taken ten dollars from Durand's bureau drawer."

"But Durand's room is in the other entry."

"That makes no difference. You can reach all the entries through the basement."

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

"I'LL match you for ice-cream soda, Bosworth," said Marks.

"All right," replied Bosworth, cheerfully, as he flipped the coin with a skill born of experience. "Heads it is. I'll pay, come on. Two ice-cream sodas, Sam."

The clerk filled the glasses to the accompaniment of remarks on the ball games. Sam knew his business; agreeable conversation was served gratis at the counter with all soda orders. For fellows like Marks this made no great demand on the server's originality.

"Taylor didn't get his home run on Saturday," remarked the clerk, gazing out of the window at the passers-by.

"No, he didn't," replied Marks. "I don't

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know what's got into Walt. He hasn't made a long drive in two games."

"Getting stale, perhaps," said the clerk, who had only a dim idea as to what "stale" meant, but fancied the word.

"A little too sure," said Marks. "He'll take a brace before the Hillbury game."

"Tompkins is making quite a pitcher." The clerk offered the suggestion indifferently. There were two opinions as to Tompkins among his patrons.

"I don't know about that," answered Marks, with a knowing tilt of his head. "Tompkins isn't anything great when he's at his best, and when he's poor, he's no good at all. He's got a good drop and an underhand rise, and the usual out and in, but that's about all."

"It's Sands who really does the pitching," added Bosworth, draining his glass. "Sands tells him exactly where to put the ball, and all the pitcher has to do is to follow his directions. There's no great credit in that."

The clerk was about to remark that to put the ball where it was wanted required some

## MAKING THE NINE

ability, but on second thought concluded that he had given his customers their money's worth, and remained silent. Bosworth was going through his pockets.

"I thought I had a quarter," he murmured, a little confused.

Marks displayed no interest in the search. He had change in his purse, but it was late in the season to lend. Besides, he did not want to lend twenty cents: it was too small a sum to ask back again.

"I shall have to break a bill, then," said Bosworth, drawing out a ten-dollar note from his waistcoat pocket.

"You're lucky!" said Marks, opening his eyes. "I've only two dollars left, and it's ten days to my next allowance."

The clerk changed the bill with his usual nonchalant air, and turned his attention to more interesting customers. The two boys sauntered out.

In front of the store they met Poole. Bosworth gave him a stare, and Marks a cool nod, which Phil returned as coolly.

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

"He has cheek, that cub, to try for the nine," said Marks. "I told Sands he was a fool not to fire him long ago."

"He's Melvin's room-mate," returned Bosworth, in a spiteful tone. "These athletic fellows hang together. I shall be surprised if they don't work the little lamb in somewhere."

"Not Sands," replied Marks. "Favoritism doesn't go down with him. There's been a lot of talk about it, though. I've heard fellows say that the kid was the best thrower in the outfield, and pretend that Lyford thought so, too. I heard Lyford say one day that Poole was the only man playing who knew how to bunt; but that's nothing. I don't believe they'll be likely to put out big husky fellows like Vincent and Sudbury and Taylor, who are good for long hits, for a little bantam that can only bunt."

Bosworth, less interested in baseball than in cultivating the acquaintance of a man whom he thought popular, drew out his watch.

"I must be getting home," he said. "I've got a lot of Latin to work out before twelve o'clock."

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Marks sniffed: "Work out! Still doing that, are you? Come up to my room and I'll lend you a trot. I've got a whole stableful,—Bohns, Interlinears, Teachers' Editions, Hinds and Noble,—whatever you want. It's the best collection in town."

On Wednesday the nine played the Harvard Second. Phil sat on the bench as usual, waiting for the chance that never came, amusing himself by guessing from the attitude of the players at the bat where their hits would be, and planning the position he should take in left-field, if he were playing, for the various men. Ordinarily, when a visiting nine had already played Hillbury, he contrived to strike up a conversation with the pitcher or some of the fielders, and learn if possible where and how the various Hillbury batters had hit. To-day the players from the University had seemed so imposing—one of them was a famous Varsity half-back—that the boy had not yet mustered courage to accost them.

By this process of questioning visiting teams,  
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Phil had gathered a very considerable fund of information about the peculiarities of the individuals who made up the Hillbury team. The pitchers contributed most to this fund, for they were often able to recall clearly just what kind of balls had deceived the respective Hillbury batsmen, and what had proved unsuccessful. One was easily caught by a sharp drop, another could not hit a fast straight ball kept high, still another was regularly fooled by a change of pace. All these discoveries, with other facts culled from newspaper accounts, went down in the baseball notebook which Phil had started early in the winter, but no one except Dick had yet seen. He meant in time to submit the results to Sands and Tompkins ; at present he was still collecting facts.

The game was already past the fourth inning, without a run scored on either side. The visitors had twice got a man as far as second base, once on a fumble by Hayes, the short-stop, and a hit to centre-field ; once on a long drive to left-field close to the line, which Taylor ran for but did not reach. Tompkins was getting acquainted with the batters. He had his own

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way of testing a new man. First he tried to drive him away from the plate by a ball close in. If the batsman pulled away, he was sure he was pitching to a timid man, and caught him on an assortment of swift curves; if, on the other hand, the batsman declined to pull away, Tompkins knew that he had to do with a cool, determined hitter who would probably be able to detect the curve on the break, and meet it squarely. To such dangerous men he gave his best drops and worked high and low straight balls with a change of pace. So far his method had been successful with the visitors.

Taylor came in at the beginning of the fifth with a pale face. "I'm afraid I can't finish out, Archie," he said to Sands. "I feel so blamed sick I can hardly stand."

"What's the matter?" demanded Sands, with little show of sympathy.

"My stomach's out of order, I think," groaned Taylor. "I haven't been well all day."

"What have you been putting into it?"

"Nothing,—that is, nothing unusual."

Sands peered at him for an instant question-

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

ingly. "Well, then, go home and lie down. Here, Poole, take Taylor's place. You're up next."

The blood rushed to Phil's face ; his pulse began to leap in excited throbs. He was to have a chance in a real game,—a hard game, too ! He bent over the pile of bats to choose his favorite, glad of an opportunity to hide his confusion, and a little afraid of hearing unfriendly criticism.

"Now's your chance to show what's in you, Phil," said Watson, the third baseman, who liked the boy. "You can hit him all right."

"Stand up to the plate," warned Sands, "and don't let him frighten you. Manning isn't as bad as he looks."

Sudbury had two strikes called on him, then hit a liner over second.

"Now, Phil," said Tompkins, quietly, "you know what we expect of you."

Poole planted his left foot firmly beside the plate, raised his bat, and waited, wondering whether Manning would try on him the method Tompkins used for new men. The pitcher wound himself up with the usual absurd motion,

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and sent a ball whistling hot, that veered suddenly off the plate. Phil smiled to himself and gripped the bat more firmly. "No, I'll not bite at any such," he said to himself. "Old Rowley has given me too many of them." Next came a drop, but it was low. "Two balls!" Then one close in, which the batter hesitated on and then let pass. This was also called a ball. The next was straight and fast.

"I know you," thought Phil, and swung straight at it, meeting the ball fairly "on the nose." As he sped exultantly away to first, he saw the ball cutting a line well above the first baseman's head. Knowing that the hit was good for two bases at least, he rounded first with all his attention centred on his running, passed second, and then, looking for the ball for the first time and seeing the right-fielder just about to throw, he went on easily to third, where Watson caught him by the shoulders and made him pause. Sudbury was already back upon the bench.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Watson. "I always said you could do it. Bring your fielding to that level, and you'll get your 'S.' "

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

Sands went out on strikes ; Waddington hit a long fly to centre, which the Harvard fielder got under without much exertion and secured. He threw it in with all the speed he could, but Phil, who was waiting on the bag for the ball to touch the fielder's hands, was off with the Harvard man's first motion, and easily beat the ball to the plate.

"Why didn't he throw to second, and let second throw it home ?" inquired Tompkins of the coach. "Wouldn't that have been quicker ?"

"I think so, at that distance," said Lyford. "The great out-fielder makes a single long throw, but with players of average ability two quick line throws will bring the ball in sooner and more accurately."

Hayes hit to second base and made the third man out. The Seatonians trotted contentedly away to their positions ; they were sure of two runs, anyway.

Out at left Phil was abandoned to his own devices. Either because he wanted to try the player, or because he had no distinct notion as

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to where the batter was likely to hit, Sands gave no hint as to the best position for the fielder to take. As Hawkins, the second baseman, who led the batting list, stood boldly up to the plate as if he were longing to pound the first ball pitched, Phil took a position well out, drawing, he knew not why, somewhat toward the side-lines. Hawkins did pound the first ball pitched, but he struck a trifle too soon, and a little underneath. The result was a beautiful high foul over by the benches on the edge of the field. Instinctively, as the ball rose, the left-fielder started. It fell easily into his hands ten yards outside the foul line. The second batter went out on a grounder to Watson. The next man up sent a fly between centre and left, which Poole, who was nearer, also took. In five minutes Seaton was at bat again.

In the sixth and seventh neither side scored, though the collegians repeatedly got men on bases, and Phil captured another fly, this time in short out-field. In the eighth the visitors, through an error by Robinson, and hard hitting, succeeded in tying the score.

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

The schoolboys came in for the last inning a little depressed. Hillbury had beaten the Harvard Second six to four. If their rivals had made six runs, in the face of a good pitcher like Manning, while Seaton could make but two, the inference was obvious. With three balls called, Robinson went out on strikes. Watson got his base on balls. Sudbury made his second hit,—a clean drive to centre, advancing Watson to third. Phil took his bat and started for the plate.

“Bunt the first one and let Watson come home,” said Lyford, as Phil passed him.

“I can bunt a low ball,” said Phil, “but what shall I do if it comes high?”

“Hit it out,” said Lyford.

There were calls for the batter, and Phil hurried to his position, took a firm stand, and waited. The first one was low and a little wide, but Phil reached over to meet it, and dropped it along the side-lines halfway between home and third. The same instant he was off, running with all his might for first. Watson had started at half speed with the pitch, and on the bunt

## MAKING THE NINE

came on with all his strength, reaching home just as the pitcher picked up the ball. Meantime Phil, with his left-hander's start, was safe at first when the pitcher threw to cut him off, and Sudbury went on to third.

The schoolboys on the benches cheered loudly at the successful play, breaking suddenly off to watch the next move. Sands hit at the first ball pitched and sent a grounder to the third baseman, who fumbled just long enough to prevent his throw to first. Then came two strikes on Waddington in quick succession. Sands gave the signal for a double steal, and on the next pitch started hard for second, and Phil a trifle later for third. The Harvard catcher hesitated, then threw to third; but in his haste he threw a little wide and the boy slid safely. Waddington went out on strikes, and Hayes took his place.

"Two men out, run on anything!" shouted Watson at the side-lines. The Harvard catcher pretended a passed ball, and ran back a few feet, but Watson saw the trick and kept Phil on the base. Hayes had two strikes and three

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

balls called on him. The crowd waited eagerly for the next pitch.

"Four balls!" Hayes sped away to first, Manning snarled and stamped, the crowd yelled. Tompkins came up bat in hand, with a determined look on his face. "One ball!" The catcher threw to third, but Phil, who was watching the ball as a cat watches the low flight of a bird, flung himself back in safety. The Harvard third, pretending to throw to first, let drive at second. Sands scrambled back as best he could, but the ball reached the base before he did, and only the error of the second baseman, who seemed as much surprised as Sands, saved the latter from an out.

Tompkins, who knew he was no batter, was waiting. "Two balls!" "One strike!" The next one tempted him and he hit at it, but it was a wide out curve. "Two strikes!" Then came an in curve, sweeping in over the corner of the plate. Tommy did not want to try it at all, but he knew that if he did not, he should go out on called strikes; so he smote at it with all his strength, and was as much surprised as

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Manning, though by no means so unpleasantly, to see the ball go flying over the third baseman's head.

Phil came trotting in, followed closely by Sands, while Hayes paused at third. And then Tompkins, having glorified himself and brought in two runners by a two-base hit, ventured too far off second, and was ignominiously put out on a quick throw from the pitcher.

In their half of the inning, the Harvard men tried hard to retrieve themselves. The first man up went out on strikes. Big Gerold then proceeded to pound the ball to the left-field fence. Phil got it back in season to hold the man on third, but the next man brought in the run with a single. Then followed two easy in-field flies, and the game was over with the score five to three in favor of Seaton.

The students went home elated. Tompkins had held the heavy batters down to a few hits, the nine had fielded well and had hit the ball when hits were all-important. The forecast for the Hillbury game seemed at least fair.

## THE COVETED OPPORTUNITY

“ Well, what do you think now ? ” said the coach to Sands, as they walked slowly over to the dressing rooms.

“ About the game ? Why, it was a good one ; the best yet, I think.”

“ No, about Poole. Isn’t he a better man than Taylor ? ”

“ I wish I knew,” replied Sands. “ He certainly batted well to-day. I doubt if we should have done as well with Taylor. He caught three flies too, but two of those came into his hands.”

The coach smiled. “ Did you give him any directions as to where he should stand ? ”

“ Why, no, I let him take his own position.”

“ Then, do you know that those three flies, coming in two innings, were in totally different parts of the field ? ”

“ What of it ? ” asked Sands, perplexed.

“ Why, the boy has a good fielder’s instinct ; he guesses well where the batter is likely to hit.”

“ That may be luck,” replied the captain, thoughtfully.

## MAKING THE NINE

"In my opinion, at least, there is no question as to the men," said the coach, rather curtly. "Poole is better at the bat, better as a fielder, and better in another respect."

"What's that?"

"He takes good care of himself." And with this last opinion Sands had to agree.

On Thursday and Friday the team practised as usual, Poole batting with the squad, and catching flies with the out-field. Taylor was back in his place.

On Saturday morning Sands hailed Phil as they were coming out of chapel: "Be out early this afternoon."

Phil nodded, and went on into the mathematics room. "Another afternoon on the bench," he thought dismally. "Taylor's stomach isn't likely to fail him again."

As he entered his room an hour later, he found Melvin deep in the semi-weekly Seatonian which had just been delivered.

"See here, Phil," called his room-mate, with a joyful light dancing in his eyes; "here's information for you!"

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And Phil, looking over Melvin's shoulder at the passage in the "Notes and Brevities" pointed out by the stout forefinger, read, "Poole will play left-field in the game with the Harvard freshmen this afternoon."

## CHAPTER XX

### AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

“WELL, Dick, another case of thieving,—or losing. You can’t tell anything about a careless fellow like Hayes.”

“What is it this time,” asked Dick, “money?”

“Yes,” replied Varrell, “a purse out of his clothes in the gymnasium locker. He dressed early for ball practice, and tucked his key under the locker door. When he came back, the money was gone.”

“It’s strange we can’t stop this thing!” exclaimed Melvin.

“There were a dozen fellows in the locker rooms during the afternoon. Bosworth was one, of course, and he was there early, but no one suspects him. Hayes thinks it was one of the bowling-alley boys, and Farnum, who told me about it, charges it to the painter. I know who

## AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

did it, I'll bet ; but I have no more proof than in the case of the safe."

" Given that up at last, haven't you ? " said Melvin, with a broad smile of amusement on his face. " You're great on theories and suspicions, and can read a man's lips fifty feet away, but all the same, when it comes to facts, you're not there."

" That may be so, and may not be," said Varrell, with an air of superiority. " I don't pretend to be a detective, but I haven't given up hope, and shall not give it up till I board the train after the college exams in June. The fellow is getting reckless, and will sooner or later expose himself. All we can do is to watch and wait."

" Watch and wait ! " sniffed Melvin. " That's what we've been doing, isn't it ? and see, what has the result been ? Durand has lost money, and Hayes has lost money, and we're no nearer getting our hands on the thief than we were before."

" Oh, yes, we are," said Varrell. " To begin with, Eddy has become intimate again with

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Bosworth. I have seen him two or three times lately in Bosworth's room. Yesterday they had a hot discussion about something, and some of it was carried on near the window while I was at work behind my blinds. With the help of my Zeiss opera-glass I caught several expressions that gave me a clew to the conversation."

"What did they say?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"Well, Bosworth was the first one who appeared. He came to the window, wearing that sneering look of his, and looked down to see if there was any one outside. Before he turned around he looked across to my window, and as he did so, he said: 'You can't help yourself. You're in it as deep as I am. You gave me the information and shared the profits. If I get into trouble, I take you with me.' Then both remained away for some minutes. Eddy was the next to show himself, with tears running down his cheeks, and his chin jerking with sobs, so that it was hard to follow the motion of his lips. Apparently he said nothing for a minute, but just leaned his forehead against the frame of the lower sash, which was raised high. Sud-

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denly he clenched his fist and brought it down on the window seat, and cried out, ‘I won’t keep the dirty money! I’ll pay you back the first of next month, and then you will see, you miserable—’ He turned his head away so that I couldn’t see the next words. Bosworth appeared immediately and pulled him away from the window.”

“Poor little fool!” said Melvin, sadly. “What a pity we can’t do something to save him from that rascal! Bosworth has apparently got some grip on him and is scaring the life out of him.”

“He’s probably lent Eddy money, and by pretending it’s a part of what was in the safe, has tied the boy’s tongue. It is clear that Eddy holds the key to the situation. If some one could only induce him to tell what he knows, it would give us the evidence we need to banish Bosworth, and might help us to save Eddy. Does Phil know him well?”

“I don’t think they are intimate,” replied Dick, “but they know each other fairly well.”

“Why can’t Phil draw the little chap out?” said Varrell. “It’s for the boy’s own good.”

## MAKING THE NINE

Phil yielded with bad grace to the older boys' request. To a character transparently frank and wholly detesting underhand methods, the task savored of dishonesty. Only when he was assured that Eddy was in the power of a dangerous person whose grip on the boy it was important to break at the earliest possible moment, did he consent to make the attempt.

The next morning he offered to join Eddy in his room for the working out of the algebra problems. Eddy accepted the offer with alacrity, both because he welcomed assistance and because he was pleased to have a boy like Poole in his room. When the lesson was at an end, Phil asked him flatly what he found attractive in Bosworth. Eddy became red and white by turns, and said he didn't know. Then Phil pressed his question, and Eddy "didn't know" and "couldn't tell" until a great storm of tears and sobs melted the heart of the unwilling inquisitor, and brought the examination to an abrupt close. Phil had just resolution enough left before he fled the painful scene, to urge the unfortunate boy to let Bosworth wholly alone,

## AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

and if he had anything bad on his conscience to confide it to Grim or some one else who could help him.

“That settles it for the present,” said Varrell, when he heard the report. “The scoundrel has the little fool tied hand and foot. We must play the waiting game a while longer.”

“If Grim knew what we know, he would worm the facts out of Eddy in ten minutes,” said Phil.

“I’m not so sure of it,” replied Varrell. “That’s the last card, anyway; I’m not willing to play that yet.”

The season was drawing toward its interesting end. On the following Saturday was to be held the school track meet, a week later the contest with Hillbury, and after another week the great baseball game with the same rivals. Before and after the athletic contests, and sprinkled in among them, came the Morgan Prize Speaking, the Morgan Composition Reading, the contests for the English and Mathematical prizes, class dinners, society elections, preparation for class-day,—opportunities and pleasures of every vari-

## MAKING THE NINE

ety to goad the conscientious and inspire the indifferent. Varrell restricted his ambition to his studies and pole vaulting, and so had strength in reserve for the still hunt after "Beelzebub," — a name which after three months of Milton gradually and naturally replaced "Bosworth" in the private conversations of the two friends.

Melvin's occupations were more varied. Besides his regular school work, which he was anxious to do well to the very end, there were the troublesome duties of track manager to be performed, the regular jumping practice to be kept up, and a class-day part to prepare. The "still hunt" he left to Varrell, who undertook to do the watching while Dick attended to the waiting.

The cares of management proved considerably greater than Melvin had anticipated. In addition to the worry of collecting subscriptions, and the necessity of bothering with the large number of men and numerous details involved in a dozen events, he found himself bearing burdens that really belonged to another. Dickinson, the captain, possessed a very peculiar character.

## AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

He could run like a deer. In the two-twenty and the quarter ordinary handicaps seemed of no use against him. This year he had been experimenting with the hundred yards as well, and in two trials out of three, he could give Tommy Travers, who had been for two years the best hundred-yard man in school, three or four yards and beat him with ease. Yet with this marvellous natural ability, which had lifted him suddenly the year before from a position of unimportance to one of great popularity, he had only a slight interest in his sport. He ran because the school wanted him to run, not because he either loved the sport or hankered after the glory of winning. Left to himself, he would sooner or later have abandoned the track altogether and settled back into solitary moping with his books. As it was, he often appeared moody and apathetic, and neglected many of the duties which a captain likes especially to perform. Inspiration and push had to come from the manager.

The jumping took a course discouragingly uncertain. Almost every day Dick began his

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practice with the feeling that he had reached his limit. Sometimes, as he dropped an inch or two below previous records, he was convinced of it. Then, on the next day, perhaps, or the day after, when he had concluded that there was no great jump in him, and that he must be satisfied with a moderate achievement, he would surprise himself by going a half inch higher than he had ever attained before. And there were times, when he had enjoyed a particularly long and restful sleep, or his physical condition was exactly right, at which he really felt like jumping. Then his ambition went wild, and he told himself, exultantly, that the limit was still far away. Such days came rarely. Should he have one on the twenty-third, or more important still, on the thirtieth?

On Tuesday evening Dick and Varrell and Phil went together to the chapel to hear the Prize Speaking. Curtis joined them at the door, and all four took seats near the front. It was a long performance, but the boys listened with interest, and amused themselves by guessing on the merits of the contestants, as speech fol-

## AN UNEXPECTED BLOW

lowed speech in close succession. Curtis voted for Planter, Melvin for Durand, Varrell for Todd, and Phil for a boy who delivered an extract from a speech by Henry Clay. When the judges returned the award of first prize to Planter, second to Von Gersdorf, and honorable mention for Todd and Durand, each flattered himself on his critical judgment.

Varrell said good-night at the steps of Carter, and went on to his own dormitory. Curtis, who was in a talkative mood, proposed to "go up for a minute." When he had settled himself in an arm-chair, Phil, who distrusted such "minutes," gathered up his Greek books and retreated to a classmate's room across the hall.

"Do you know, Dick, Planter is the kind of fellow I admire. He ranks well,—almost as well as you do,—and he's an editor of the Seatonian and on the Lit., and is always to the fore on an occasion like this. Fletcher is a better scholar, I suppose, but he's nothing else; Planter can write and speak as well as get marks; he has good manners too, and is always a gentleman."

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"I didn't know you admired gentle qualities," said Dick, amused, "and as for marks, why, it's only this year that you've been on friendly terms with any kind of school-books."

"Better late than never. I've had a lot of new ideas this year."

"Are you going back on athletics?" asked Dick.

"They are all right in their place. I wouldn't exchange my football experiences for anything this crank factory ever gave to Daniel Webster or any other great genius who got his first 'call down' on our benches. But I don't want to be always John Curtis the football player. I want something better than that."

"John Curtis the Harvard freshman?" suggested Dick.

Curtis smiled grimly. "That's what I'm going to be, if it's possible for the possessor of my brains. I'm making headway, too. If I'd only begun last year, I might have been somewhere now."

"You can do it yet," said Dick, encouragingly.

"I'll make a bluff at it, anyway," replied the

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football captain ; "but it's like trying to rush the ball seventy yards in the last ten minutes of the game."

Phil came in, looked significantly at the clock, and took off his coat.

"Yes, I know it's time for me to go," said Curtis, struggling to his feet. "We're all in training, and ought to be in bed by this time. That was a good game you put up last Saturday."

Phil looked at him suspiciously.

"Oh, I mean it," added Curtis. "And you'll have the crowd with you, too, if you can keep it up. Don't mind what you hear from Marks and that gang."

On Thursday Dick came home promptly after supper for a long evening's pull at his class-day part. Phil was already there.

"Did you see that letter from Cambridge, Dick ?" he asked. "I put it on the mantelpiece."

Melvin took it up carelessly. "From Martin," he said, glancing at the address. "I wonder what he wants."

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He opened it while Phil stood quietly by, waiting for news of their old school friend. As Melvin read, a tense, serious look came over his face, and he lifted his head instinctively, as if to meet an adversary. After he had finished, he still held the letter in his hand, and sat staring stupidly at the window.

“What is it?” cried Phil. “Has anything happened to Martin?”

“No, but something has happened to us. Read it and see.”

And Phil read this:—

“DEAR OLD DICK: Just a word to tell you of some kind of a scheme on foot to protest Dickinson. I got it from a junior who rooms in my entry, who got it from an old Hillbury man. They say that Dickinson ran in a race in Indiana last Fourth of July for a money prize, and they have posters to show that he was advertised to take part in the race. Is it so? If it is, he has buried himself for school and college athletics as deep as China. If it isn’t, you’ll have to disprove the charge fair

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and square, beyond the point where a doubt can be imagined, or they'll shut him out. Bestir yourself!

“Yours and Seaton's forever,

“L. M. M.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Phil, as Dick put on his hat.

“I'm going to have it out with Dickinson first,” replied the senior, bitterly. “Then we'll see what's to be done.”

## CHAPTER XXI

### A GLOOMY PROSPECT

DICKINSON was in his room. He had just returned, also planning for a long pull at his books, the usual evening routine for him. Melvin banged at the door, then jerked it open with little ceremony. Dickinson looked up in mild wonder.

"Hello! I thought you had consecrated your evening to the Muses. What's up? You look as if you were on the war-path."

"I am," answered the visitor, fiercely. His face was set in harsh lines, while his voice, which he vainly strove to control, came forth choked and strained and trembling. "Do you know what makes a professional?"

"Why, I suppose I do," replied the wondering Dickinson, who was giving less attention to the question than to his friend's unaccountable agitation.

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“ Well, what is it ? ”

“ Why, to play for money or your board, or any such compensation.”

“ Anything else ? ”

“ Yes, to compete with professionals, or for money prizes, or — ”

“ Or what ? ” demanded the questioner.

“ Or take part in some kind of an open contest, which the governing boards for some technical reason or other forbid. I never understood about it very well,—in fact, never concerned myself with it. It doesn’t affect us, and it seemed to me quite enough to know the general rules. The genuine amateur doesn’t need rules, anyway. His own instinct for what’s right and fair would keep him straight.”

“ Oh, it would ! ” replied the manager with virulent sarcasm.

“ Yes, it would ! ” retorted Dickinson, catching fire himself at the persistent cross-examination. “ What’s got into you, anyway ? Why do you come here in this choking, crazy fashion and ask me wild questions ? What do you mean ? ”

Dickinson was standing now, facing his visitor

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with a challenging look, which warned Melvin that he was beginning wrong. He hesitated a moment, trying to control his voice, and groping for a simple way back to the proper path.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Dickinson, in peremptory tones. "Don't stand there rolling your eyes. Out with it!"

"It's about you, Jim," said Melvin, at last, abandoning any attempt at a wise leading of the conversation, and speaking, as his anger cooled somewhat, with less animosity and more sorrow in his voice. "Did you really run in Indiana last summer with professionals for a money prize?"

For a short minute Dickinson blinked at the questioner in stupefaction. Then with a quick transformation, as memory presented a picture of a past occurrence, the blood came rushing to his cheeks and a fierce light blazed in his eyes.

"Well, what about it?" demanded Dick, again the examiner, but losing his bitterness before the glare of indignation which Dickinson threw upon him. "Can't you speak?"

"There's no use in speaking," answered the

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runner, sullenly. "If you think I'm that kind of a man, it makes no difference what I say. My word wouldn't be good for anything. A man will always lie about the first money he gets for athletics."

"It's a question of knowing, not of thinking," said Dick.

"Exactly!" returned Dickinson, bitterly. "And this is the way you know me! If my running hasn't given any better impression of me than that, I'll stop it altogether. I never wanted to run. You drove me into it against my will. I will slip out with pleasure."

"Hang it, Jim! answer my question, won't you?" cried Dick, desperate. "Did you run last summer in a Fourth of July race with professionals, or not?"

"Of course I didn't," replied Dickinson, sulkily. "You ought to have more sense than to take stock in such a yarn. I never ran a race in my life except in this school and at Hillbury last year."

Melvin drew a long breath. His courage was coming back and his wrath was cooling, but the mystery was yet to be explained.

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“How did this story start, then?”

“What story?” snapped Dickinson.

“Why, that you did take part in some such race in your town last summer,” returned Dick, patiently, yet feeling that Dickinson’s present balkiness certainly warranted suspicion of past folly if not of guilt.

“I don’t know anything about any story,” answered Dickinson. “I was asked to run in the races and declined. Through some misunderstanding my name was mentioned in the advertisements, but I did not run,—in fact, was not even present.”

“Was your name down in the handbills?”

“It may have been. I don’t know about that.”

“Who was the manager?”

“I don’t recall his name — one of the sporting men around town. I know the name of the head of the general committee, and that’s all.”

“Would he be able to give us a certificate proving that you did not compete?”

“He’s in Europe,” answered Dickinson. “He wouldn’t be of any use if he were here. He had

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nothing to do with the sports at all, and he doesn't know me from Adam."

"But there must be some one to whom you can write for evidence," cried Melvin, in despair. "Wouldn't your father look the matter up for you, or your clergyman or your high school principal?"

Dickinson's features relaxed into a mournful smile. "My father indeed! Haven't I told you of his attitude on the subject? He'd welcome any pretext that would shut me out. And as for Dr. Monroe, our minister, he's a fine old man and one of the best friends I have in the world, but I shouldn't wish to send him round the streets looking up evidence regarding my running. The principal of the high school would do the job thoroughly if we could give him plenty of time, but he's a very busy man and might not get to it immediately."

"Might not get to it immediately!" echoed Melvin. "Why, Jim, do you know how much time we have?—just five days. The protest will have to be met on Wednesday. If we are not prepared then, judgment will go against us."

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"They'll have to give us reasonable time in which to disprove charges, won't they?" retorted Dickinson. "They certainly don't expect every fellow to carry round in his pocket certificates of his amateur standing."

"The rules say definitely that protests must be decided on the Wednesday before the games, and Hillbury will take good care that the rules are followed. Whatever we do must be done before Wednesday. We must write the letters to-night."

"Let's talk it over with Varrell first," said Dickinson, "he knows more than all the rest of us put together. It may be that he will think of some way of getting us out of the hole."

The meeting was adjourned to Varrell's room, where the facts were discussed again. The wisdom of Varrell furnished no other expedient than that already proposed of writing to several men whose names Dickinson had mentioned, in the hope that cut of the whole number at least one would answer fully and promptly, with evidence that could not be gainsaid.

Late in the evening the captain and the manager separated, having written the letters

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and made sure of their prompt departure by carrying them to the office instead of leaving them in the street boxes. Anxious as the boys were to speed the cause, there was nothing now left to them but to wait quietly for the returning messages and control their impatience as best they could. To Dickinson, whose temperament inclined to moroseness, this waiting was not so difficult. He had always shown an inconceivable indifference to the athletic ambition which was so powerful an animus in the lives of the boys about him. The immediate effect of the unpleasant news was to change his indifference to disgust. The accusation was groundless and unjust; if he must prove his innocence against every absurd charge which could be suddenly trumped up against him, the sooner he was done with athletics the better. The game was not worth the candle.

Weary of the disagreeable subject, Dickinson went to bed and fell quickly asleep. Not so the unfortunate manager. To him the fleet runner was a school possession, intrusted to his keeping as a fine blade to the care of the armorer, who

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must produce it at the call of its owner, glittering, keen, and ready for instant use. He heard the clock strike twelve and one, as he rolled nervously from one side of the bed to the other, vainly courting elusive sleep, or brooding over the perplexing situation. Dickinson might not have suggested the right men to appeal to; the letters might not reach their destination safely; the people to whom they were addressed might not answer promptly; the committee might not give proper weight to the answers received. He recalled with alarm stories he had read in newspapers of the accidental destruction of mail cars. The letters would be forwarded together; an accident to a single pouch would stop them all. He groaned aloud as he pictured himself and Dickinson and the school waiting hopeful and helpless, day after day, mail after mail, for letters which, having never been sent, could never arrive.

Varrell also was awake late. Stretched in his easy-chair, with feet comfortably cushioned on the window-seat, he gazed out into the peaceful night and pondered the same problem which

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was distressing his friend. When at length he rose to his feet and turned up the light, there was the shadow of a smile on his face and a gleam of satisfaction in his eye, which indicated that one at least of the three seniors had cudgelled his brain to some purpose.

The trio came together next morning on the way to chapel.

"Did you get the letters off?" asked Varrell. Melvin nodded.

"Did you write to the newspapers?" continued Varrell. "The newspaper men are usually best posted on local happenings."

Manager and captain looked at each other in surprise. "We didn't think of them," confessed Dickinson. "There's the *Times* and the *Chronicle*. Some one in those offices ought to know the facts perfectly well."

"I'll write to them both immediately after chapel," said Melvin, joyfully. "Much obliged, Wrenn; I knew you'd help us."

While Melvin composed his letters, Varrell was at the telegraph office sending messages to the same addresses. But he kept his own counsel.

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The school sports were held on Saturday, with rather disappointing results. Dickinson won his races, as was expected, but he made no new records, and his form was evidently not as good as he had shown in the same sports a year before. The school was disappointed, but not hopelessly so, for Marks's expert opinion that Dickinson had reached his limit and would now go backward, found no general acceptance outside his own small set. Melvin won second place in the high jump, barely succeeding in doing five feet five, though in practice the week before he had several times got easily over the bar at five feet six. It was little comfort to him to know, as the others did not, that his slump was due, not to inability, but to anxiety for Dickinson. Varrell alone of the three gained glory by the work of the day, winning his event by a vault only a trifle below the school record.

That night came formal notice of the protest of Dickinson, to be adjudicated on the following Wednesday. The news flashed through the school with the usual electrifying force, charging every loyal heart with dismay and indignation.



In the Campus Woods.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE DECISION OF THE COURT

"WE certainly ought to hear to-night," said Melvin on Monday, as, with Phil and Dickinson, he hung round the office, waiting for the mail to be distributed. "If the letters arrived Saturday, and the people attended to the matter promptly, the answers might have been mailed Saturday night."

"More likely they didn't arrive until Saturday night or this morning," replied Dickinson, who took a less optimistic view. "Then if the people are like most others when you ask them for a favor, they'll get round to the thing on Tuesday or later, and the letters may arrive on Thursday or any time during the following week — if indeed they are written at all."

Nothing for Melvin; nothing for Dickinson; two papers for Varrell; Dick's heart sank.

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“We have all day to-morrow, and the first mail on Wednesday,” he said at length, as the trio turned gloomily homeward.

A figure passed them on the other side of the lane, hurrying toward the office.

“Here are a couple of papers for you, Varrell,” called Phil. But Varrell was already past, unresponsive to the hail.

“Throw them at him!” growled Dickinson. “He never hears anything when his back is turned.”

Phil hit the mark, and Varrell stooped for the parcels.

“Not a letter, Wrenn, not a blamed letter for any of us; just these papers for you. I felt like throwing them into the river!”

“I’m glad you didn’t,” replied Varrell, studying the postmark. “I’ll take half a loaf any time, even if you fellows get no bread. Old newspapers are sometimes valuable.”

Tuesday was not a day of profitable study for Melvin. He went to his recitations, but in some he got excused, and in others he blundered most shabbily. His whole attention was given to

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waiting on the mails. In the morning nothing, in the afternoon nothing, at night a single besmooched, bescrawled envelope, bearing the postmark "Ralston, Indiana"!

"The jewel at last," grinned Varrell, as he read the address over Melvin's shoulder. "Open the case!"

"It isn't a joking matter," replied Dick, seriously. "A good deal hangs on this letter."

"Dirt especially," said Varrell. "Come, open it up!"

Melvin cut the envelope carefully and brought the following to light:—

*This is to certify that Jim Dackson  
did not run on the July 4<sup>th</sup> Sports as  
advertised*

*Yours respy.*

*Michael Ryan*

"Is that all?" asked Varrell.

Melvin examined again. "Everything."

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"I'm afraid he couldn't pass English A," said Varrell.

They walked for some minutes in silence, Melvin too much disgusted with his companion's flippancy to speak.

"If you can talk seriously, I'd like to ask you something," he said at length; "but I don't want any more nonsense."

"I'm serious," replied Varrell, gravely.

"What do you think of it? Will they take it or not?"

"I'm afraid it's no good," said Varrell. "What they want is evidence complete and certain, that can't be dodged or questioned or denied. This is proof only to those who will accept its authority; it isn't what they call irrefragable."

Melvin groaned. "You might at least have spared me a word like that."

The grin stole back upon Varrell's face. Melvin turned away indignant and disheartened.

Varrell clutched the stern-faced youth by the arm. "Dick, don't go off mad! I'm not so useless as I seem. Come up to the room and let me show you something."

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Ten minutes later, the athletic manager came plunging down the stairs four steps at a time, his face aglow with smiles, his whole being radiant with the joy that follows a long-borne disappointment, as the sun comes forth more glorious after slow dark days of northeast storm.

“The old rascal!” he muttered ; “the shrewd old foxy rascal! and he’s had the thing in his pocket all day! I felt like kicking him and hugging him at the same time. If I could only have a try at the high jump now! Couldn’t I do six feet!”

Two flights down, across the yard, two flights up! He found Dickinson with his nose in a dictionary of antiquities, packing away learning by the cubic inch. The nose came out in a trice ; when it went back, a good half hour afterward, it had lost somewhat the keenness of its scent for facts, and the two eyes above it gleamed bright and determined. Thence the manager hied him home to bed, and slept nine solid, refreshing hours.

The official student representative on the

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Hillbury-Seaton athletic committee was the captain of the team. As Dickinson was naturally excluded from the discussion by the fact that his own name was under protest, Melvin was to take his place. He was accompanied to the station by Curtis and Varrell.

"Rub it in if you get the chance," said Curtis, savagely. "It's one of their tricks; don't spare 'em."

"I hope you'll do no such thing," said the pacific Varrell. "It wouldn't be either courteous or safe. I believe they're quite square about the thing; and you must assume that they are, anyway, even if you think differently."

"I agree with you," said Dick, thoughtfully. "The advertisement certainly gives a very strong ground for suspicion, and our case isn't so sure that we can afford to stir up any unpleasant feelings."

"The main thing is to go carefully and arouse as little opposition as possible," continued Varrell. "Stick to the plan we laid out if you can."

The train came roaring and clanking in.

"Don't let 'em fool you, anyway," said Cur-

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tis, giving a hard grip to the manager's arm.  
"Come back victorious or we'll lynch you."

"And don't play your trump card first,"  
added Varrell.

The meeting was held in Boston. The committee was composed of six members, one from the students, one from the faculty, and one from the alumni, of each school. Hillbury was represented by Professor Loder, Mr. Harkins, a shrewd lawyer, and Captain McGee of the Hillbury track team. For Seaton appeared besides Melvin, Mr. Pope to represent the faculty, and Dr. Brayton, a young Boston surgeon, who, with all the engagements and responsibilities of a busy practice, was still willing to undergo some sacrifice to serve his school. Mr. Pope was made chairman and Professor Loder secretary.

"Our business is to decide concerning the protest made by the Hillbury manager against Dickinson," said the chairman. "I will read the protest and then ask Mr. Harkins, who is used to presenting cases in court, to make a statement of the charges."

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"I'm used to appearing as attorney, not as judge," returned the lawyer, smiling. "Here we are acting in a judicial capacity."

Dick studied the lawyer's face as the protest was read, and came speedily to the conclusion that he should like Mr. Harkins less as judge than as attorney. The face was mobile and intelligent, yet something in its lines suggested unscrupulousness. Dick had but little time in which to gain this impression, for Mr. Harkins's words, rather than his face, now received his whole attention.

"The charge, briefly stated, is that Dickinson has been associated with professional runners in an open race, contrary to the most fundamental rule of amateur athletics."

"When and where?" inquired Dr. Brayton, turning to the Hillbury captain.

"On July fourth of last year, in Ralston, Indiana," replied McGee, promptly.

"What is your source of information?"

"The advertisements. Mr. Harkins, will you kindly pass the poster to Dr. Brayton?"

It was a large-lettered notice, such as one

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frequently sees displayed in shop windows, announcing among other attractions a race for a prize of fifteen dollars, in which Smith, Doyle, Jackson, and "J. W. Dickinson, who holds many school and college records," would compete.

The fateful poster passed from hand to hand about the table. Dick awaited his turn with curiosity, yet with a heavy sinking of the heart. Was it possible that this miserable sheet of coarse paper should have power to work so much harm?

"What answer does Dickinson make?" said Dr. Brayton, at length, turning to Melvin.

"He denies that he has ever run in any race in his life except in the Seaton and Hillbury contests," answered Melvin, speaking with a little tremor in his voice, but yet composedly and coolly. "The advertisement was made without his consent or knowledge."

"While it may seem invidious to question the sufficiency of a man's word," said Mr. Harkins, with a bland smile, "I think you gentlemen will all agree with me that we should be false to our duty if we accepted Mr. Dickinson's unsupported denial as a conclusive answer to the protest."

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"Of course," replied Dr. Brayton, promptly. "The only question is where the burden of proof lies."

"On the defendant, I should say very positively," said Professor Loder. "We are striving to maintain our contests on such a high plane that not a breath of suspicion can be cast on the amateur standing of any one who competes in them. This advertisement has thrown serious doubts on the eligibility of Dickinson for the school sports. It is for him to clear himself of suspicion."

A moment's silence followed before Mr. Harbins spoke again: "If I may be allowed another word, I should like to add that the principle to be followed is not the maxim of the criminal courts,—'It is better that nine guilty men escape rather than that one innocent man should suffer,' — but the famous direction of President Grant, 'Let no guilty man escape!' Less harm is done by barring five unfairly than by allowing one to compete who has forfeited his privilege."

"You and I were not so sure about that twenty years ago," said Dr. Brayton, with a

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smile. "If you displace a man unjustly, you interfere with the equality of the representation, and the contests are again unfair. What we are after here is the facts in the case. We all agree that this poster raises a reasonable doubt as to the eligibility of Dickinson. Is this all we are to know about it?"

"Mr. Melvin has some counter evidence to put in," said the chairman.

Dick awoke with a start. He had been so much absorbed in following the argument of the older members of the committee that he had for the moment forgotten the task devolving on him.

"I think I ought to say," remarked Melvin, as he drew from his pocket the illiterate missive of Michael Ryan, "that this protest was entirely unexpected, and we were allowed a very short time in which to prepare a defence. If we had not heard of it by chance a day or two before the notice came, we should have had absolutely nothing to offer."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Professor Loder, looking sharply at McGee. "That seems unfair."

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"We didn't find it out until late," said McGee, reddening, "and then we had to call a meeting."

"We wrote to Ralston immediately," continued Melvin, "and have received this certificate from the manager of the athletic sports referred to in the poster. If there had been more time, we should probably have more letters to present."

He handed the scrawl to the chairman, who gave it a glance and passed it to Dr. Brayton. The latter smiled over it and handed it to his neighbor. So it developed smiles as it went the round until all were smiling except Dick, whose face was purple with confusion, but bitterly stern.

"I'd like to see this put in as evidence in a court of law," chuckled Mr. Harkins. "It bears neither date nor attestation, concerns one Dickson, not Dickinson, and gives no hint as to Michael's authority."

"I shouldn't wonder if Michael could explain himself if he were here," said Dr. Brayton, thoughtfully.

"You certainly wouldn't give weight to an

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indefinite unauthenticated certificate like that!" protested Mr. Harkins.

"Yes, if I were convinced that it represented a genuine attempt to give the information we ask," replied Dr. Brayton. "I don't know whether to take this seriously or not."

"What evidence should you consider sufficient to disprove the charge?" asked Mr. Pope, turning to Mr. Harkins. Dick gave the teacher a grateful look; it was the question he wanted to ask.

"Why—er—" Mr. Harkins was momentarily at a loss; his interest was all on the negative side. "Why, any trustworthy record of the day's events which showed that Dickinson did not take part."

"There probably was no official report," Dick ventured to say.

"Well, any definite statement by reliable people who were in a position to know," said Professor Loder.

"A newspaper report of the day's events, perhaps?" suggested Dick, trying to control his eagerness.

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"Yes, if it were definite," assented the professor.

"Well, here is a paper published in Ralston on the sixth of July, and while it describes the games and names the contestants, it makes no mention of Dickinson."

Dr. Brayton took the paper and examined the passage carefully, then turned it over to Professor Loder and Mr. Harkins, who put their heads together over it. At length the lawyer looked up with a gracious smile, and said in his smoothest judicial tones : —

"I am sorry, Mr. Melvin, but this is by no means conclusive. Certain names of contestants are given, with their places at the finish, but there is nothing here to prove that Dickinson did not start and fall so far behind as not to finish. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I should hardly feel justified myself in accepting this negative evidence as confuting the plain statement of the poster."

"Then the report of the proceedings would prove nothing after all," said Dick, bitterly. "Professor Loder has just said that the newspaper report would be sufficient."

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"It would," replied Mr. Harkins, with forbearance, "if it had contained the plain statement that Dickinson did not run."

"Is that your idea, too?" asked Dick, turning to Professor Loder. The boy's heart was fluttering, his hands and knees shook under the table, but his voice was steady, and for this he felt unspeakably grateful.

"Certainly," said Professor Loder, with some sharpness in his voice. "We do not demand the impossible. If the newspaper had stated that Dickinson did not run, there would be nothing more to say."

"Then there is nothing more to say," declared Dick, leaping to his feet in his eagerness to relieve the nervous tension which had been growing more and more acute as the discussion went on. "Here is the *Ralston Chronicle*, which makes that very statement."

Mr. Harkins seized the paper and studied the black-lined passage with evident chagrin. He was still studying, not wholly hopeless of a flaw, when Professor Loder, after looking over the lawyer's shoulder at the paragraph, said: "Yes,

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that seems to settle it; the protest must be withdrawn. I am sorry, however, that you could not have been more frank with us."

Dick flushed deep red. "I hope, sir, you don't think I've taken an underhand course. I only meant to make sure that the newspaper statement would be accepted as sufficient evidence. You see, sir, I am positive that Dickinson is innocent, because I know him and trust him, but I couldn't tell how the evidence would appeal to others."

"And so you committed us first and then put in the evidence," said Dr. Brayton. "The fact is, Professor Loder, that the great danger in these discussions lies, not in any difference in ideals, but in the vagueness of our notions as to what constitutes proof of guilt or innocence. I am inclined to think Mr. Melvin's method has tended to bring us sooner to an agreement."

Professor Loder made no reply. The *Chronicle* passed slowly around the table. Mr. Harkins conceived some new plan, and returned to the discussion.

"To tell the truth, I don't like this kind of evidence," he began, solemnly.

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Professor Loder gave him a look of disapproval. "I don't see how you can honestly object to it. It is of the same kind as that of the poster, but much more definite and authoritative."

The words brought a glint of gratitude and respect into the Seaton manager's eyes. It was apparent that there were fair and honest men in the Hillbury Faculty as well as at Seaton.

"Is this the only case cited under the charge?" asked Mr. Harkins, turning with impatience to McGee.

"The only one I know of," answered the lad. Mr. Harkins relapsed into ill-humored silence.

"Am I then to assume that we have reached a definite conclusion?" asked the chairman.

"I move that the committee report itself satisfied as to the groundlessness of the charges, and that the Hillbury manager be given leave to withdraw the protest," said Professor Loder, promptly.

The motion was put and unanimously carried. The meeting broke up. Mr. Harkins alleged important business, offered a general farewell, and hurriedly departed. Dick lingered to thank

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Professor Loder and Dr. Brayton for their courtesy and fairness, arranged with McGee a few details concerning the games, and then hastened to the telegraph office to send the joyful news ahead.

He was received by the boys that night as a victorious diplomat returning from an international Congress. The only circumstance to mar his complete happiness was the reluctance of the school to believe that Varrell, and Varrell alone, deserved the credit for securing the evidence and for the successful presentation of it.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE GREAT TRACK MEET

Two days of uneasiness and discussion, and the momentous Saturday was at hand. The indifference which Melvin felt at the beginning of the season, when the responsibilities of the management were loaded upon his shoulders, had long since vanished. He had begun with it as a task, as a burden to be borne because he could bear it better than any one else; he had put into it the best of his energy and the best of his thought, he had worried and sacrificed and labored for the cause. It seemed to him now almost as if the team were his, struggling for him and for the school. His anxiety could not have been greater if his own future happiness and the welfare of the school had really been dependent on the success of the team.

From the moment the news was received that

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the protest had been rejected, Dickinson ceased to be a mere ornament to the team and became a real captain. There was fire in him now, and determination and genuine enthusiasm. His whole attitude was one of confidence and of conscious power, that lifted the weakest man in the squad out of his humiliating sense of incapacity, and made him feel that he was one of a strong company led by a strong man, and himself capable of greater things than he had ever yet accomplished.

In the mass-meeting of the school the night before the games, when the boys gathered in loyal force to give their team a "send-off" for the morrow, nothing that was said by student or graduate or friend stirred such response in the hearts of the school as the short, plain, virile exhortation of the captain.

And no athletes need personal inspiration as do the members of a track team. The football player stands shoulder to shoulder with his fellows, the strong helps the weak and shares with him the glory of victory. The baseball score may show hits and errors against the same mem-

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ber of a winning team. The runner, on the other hand, enters the field alone, fights his brief battle unaided, and either fails his team wholly or makes an individual contribution to its success ; he cannot be pushed on to victory by the efforts of another.

The wind was easterly on Saturday, bringing in from the sea a heavy thickness of atmosphere, yet with barely sufficient vitality to move the leaves. The air chilled like a March fog.

“What do you think of it ?” asked Melvin, as he met Dickinson at breakfast.

“The weather ? It’s bad on the nerves, but worse for the Hillburyites, who aren’t used to it as we are. I don’t mind it myself. All I ask is that we have no wind to buck against, and no rain.”

“It’s hard on the jumpers. When the air is cold and heavy, you can’t put any force into your spring.”

“Weather doesn’t influence me as much as other conditions do,” said Varrell. “I find it a great deal easier to jump when there’s a big, eager crowd, and the excitement runs high.”

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"You'll have excitement enough, if that's all you want," said Dick, grimly. "This Hillbury team is coming up here to win. I happen to know that they're counting on some of the very events that we've been reckoning as surely ours. If we beat Hillbury to-day, we shall have to make new records to do it."

"Let's have the new records, then, by all means," said Varrell, looking across the table at the silent captain.

On the way to chapel Tompkins joined them. "Good speech you made last night, Jimmy," said the pitcher, "better than anything I heard at the Prize Speaking."

Dickinson nodded in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"You can't fail us after that speech," continued Tompkins. "I know a couple of fellows in Hillbury, and they brag of Ropes and Lary like an agent selling a gold mine. Don't let them do you up."

"They won't unless they're better men. If they are, we want them to win."

"Not exactly," returned Tompkins. "Let

## THE GREAT TRACK MEET

the best team win, of course, only make sure we don't lose."

Melvin snorted in ridicule. " You crazy cowboy ! How can we help losing if the best team is Hillbury, and Hillbury wins ? You don't mean that we're to beat them dishonestly ? "

" My meaning is too deep for gladiatorial brains like yours," said Tommy, edging off. " I'll explain later."

The Hillburyites came by a special train in solid phalanx, happy and hopeful. The year's records were in their favor by a considerable margin. Dickinson and Curtis were the only men really feared, for Todd they considered as good as beaten, and the rest of the Seaton team, while allowed a certain number of points in accordance with the general principle of chance, were assessed at a low valuation.

At half-past two the Seaton bleachers, packed to their full capacity, were bellowing their welcome to the hundred-yards men, who had just appeared at the head of the stretch. Lary, the Hillbury champion, and Dickinson were side by side,— the former a short, solid, muscular

## MAKING THE NINE

figure, quick in every motion, the latter tall and lithe, and deliberate even to slowness. Melvin watched the preparations with an unexpected fear creeping into his heart. Was this solid, business-like person with the knotty legs and confident manner to steal a start on the Seaton captain and keep ahead to the finish? Crack! sounded the pistol and away went the men, rising from the crouching position with an instantaneous leap and throwing themselves forward into their strides.

It was true! Lary was ahead at the start by five yards, his short legs flashing over the unscarred surface of the track as the wings of a buzzing insect beat the air,—behind him Dickinson and Travers, and behind still farther the second Hillbury runner, who did not count in the score. For five seconds the three came on with the same apparent interval, then number two crept away from number three and up toward number one. Eight seconds, nine, ten, the stop-watches registered. A fraction more and the short sprinter was at the tape, Dickinson but six inches behind, and Travers in third place!

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How the visitors howled at this, the first augury of the day's success! The great Dickinson beaten in the very first race! The announcer's big megaphone roared forth the record,—it equalled the best of either school. The points gained—Hillbury five, Seaton three—were chalked on the board; and the crowd, like a hungry dog who waits greedily for a second piece of meat, turned expectant to the next event.

The half-mile was conceded to Willbur of Hillbury. In the Seaton estimates, however, Maine of Seaton had been counted on to win second place and Faxon third. Willbur ran a beautiful race that set the Hillburyites wild with pride, establishing a new dual record; but unfortunately for Seaton, the second man, who was twenty yards behind, proved to be, not Maine, but Towle of Hillbury, while Maine made a very poor third. The score went up—Hillbury twelve, Seaton four—and the hearts of the Seatonians down. The beginning was bad.

Meantime the shot-put, which had been started with the first run, was drawing near its end.

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Here at last was encouragement for the home team, for every prize fell to the wearer of a red S. Curtis was ahead as usual, with Farlow, a big two hundred pounder, second, and Trapp third.

"We've evened it up now, Toddy," cried Melvin, joyfully, as the men came out for the high hurdles. "We want seven points here, you know."

"I'll do my best," said Todd; "that's all any one can do. That Rawson may beat me, after all. They say he can do it in seventeen flat."

"Nonsense!" retorted Melvin. "Go in and beat him."

The start was in the Hillbury man's favor. Rawson flew down the stretch, knocking over half his hurdles in his course, going like a torpedo boat in a rough sea. Just behind him came Todd, taking three swift strides between hurdles and rising like a bird swooping up in its flight. They seemed neck and neck at the last obstacle, but here Rawson struck hard and lost his stride, and Todd was easily first at the

## THE GREAT TRACK MEET

finish. Smith of Seaton was third, making the score Hillbury fourteen, Seaton eighteen.

"Now's your chance for revenge," said Curtis, as Dickinson started forth for the two-twenty. "Show those fellows what you can do, when you really have room to get headway. And we shouldn't object to a new record, you know."

The captain smiled grimly. "I shall be satisfied to win."

Dickinson took his place with Travers and Ropes and Lary, at the starting line where the curve of the track began. They were a well-tested quartet. Lary was fresh from his victory in the hundred ; Travers had prizes from contests of previous years ; Ropes was a new man, hailed by the Hillbury coachers as a coming champion. To Dickinson it seemed the race of his life, so eager was he to atone for the disappointment he had given his schoolmates in his first race.

The runners got off in pairs, Travers and Lary ahead ; Ropes and Dickinson side by side, gathering headway in the rear. Around the curve it seemed that Travers was ahead, but as

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the runners struck the straightaway, they were seen to tail out into a diagonal line across the track, Lary leading, then Travers, then Ropes, and Dickinson last. The Hillburyites, seeing the dreaded champion in the rear, emitted an incoherent howl of exultation.

"Will you look at that!" cried Curtis, who stood by Melvin, near the finish line. "Out-classed, as sure as guns!"

"No! No! Watch it out!" cried Dick, in answer. Down the track swept the line of white-clad, shaking, struggling figures. When it passed the Seaton benches Dick could see the excited spectators throw up their arms, could hear the yells, and guess that the long legs were putting the ground behind them. A moment more, and he knew that the struggle was between Ropes and Dickinson for the lead; and then, as the white figures flashed by, he saw that the racers had tailed out again in the reverse order, Dickinson, Ropes, Travers, and Lary. And so the judges reported them in the finish. Score, Seaton twenty-four, Hillbury sixteen.

As the mile runners came out Melvin had

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word that the captain wished to see him. He found Dickinson in the dressing rooms, under the hands of the rubber.

“That was splendid, old man, perfectly splendid!” began the manager.

Dickinson checked him: “I didn’t bring you in here to tell me that stuff. It’s something serious. Do you know we’re not doing well? I don’t blame any one, of course. We’ve won certain points, but there are those field events at the end of the list that we aren’t at all sure of. We must get down to them with a good margin, or we’ll be beaten.”

Dick nodded silently. The high jump was to be the last event; he did not need to be told that his chance of winning this was very problematical.

“Now, I’m entered for the broad jump,” said the captain. “I put my name down because it did no harm to have it there, and occasionally, you know, I’ve made a good jump. I’m wondering if I hadn’t better go in and try two or three times, on the chance of adding a point or two to the score.”

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“But the four-forty?” exclaimed Melvin.  
“That comes right after.”

“That’s the point. Is there any risk? Their best man in the quarter is Ropes, but I’ve run past him once to-day and can do it again. I don’t feel exhausted at all, and you know the quarter is my run. I have no confidence that Brown will do anything at all in the broad jump, and Hillbury has two good jumpers at least. Shall I take the risk of hurting myself for the chance of winning a couple of points?”

“Broad jumpers out!” sounded the official warning at the door of the quarters.

“I think I’ll do it,” decided Dickinson, as Melvin hesitated.

The Hillburyites were cheering when the jumpers came out; the mile had yielded Hillbury five points and Seaton three.

“Still six ahead!” said Melvin, looking at the board.

Dickinson took one jump—nineteen feet six; then one more—twenty feet two inches; and went back to the house to have his ankle rubbed again. He did not learn until he came out for

## THE GREAT TRACK MEET

the quarter some time later, that he had won second prize, while Brown had made nothing at all. Hillbury had taken first and third.

“Twenty-seven to twenty-nine, old man!” whispered Curtis, as Todd sallied forth for the low hurdles. “They’re crawling up. Discourage them, can’t you?”

“I don’t know,” responded Todd, quietly. “I’m not afraid of Rawson, but Harding is another proposition. I can’t do the impossible.”

The hammer-throwing was started at the same time; and Curtis after his first throw found himself pitted against such superior men that his whole attention was concentrated on the new and unpleasant problem of beating men who were better than himself. He did see the race, for the hammer men interrupted their contest a minute to watch the hurdlers; but about all his absorbed mind took in, as the runners flew by, was a vision of two figures with faces set in a wild, harsh grimace, one bearing blue and the other red letters on his breast, skimming the hurdles with identical stride, like horses trotting in span, and behind again more blue letters

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and more red. There was a tremendous howling in both camps, for the race was close to the finish, and each side felt confidence in its own champion. Soon, however, Hillbury ceased to cheer, while Seaton broke out afresh, and Curtis knew that Todd had won.

The big football player went back to his post, determined not to fail his trusting schoolmates. Todd had won five points in the race just finished, and Hillbury three. The score was now Hillbury thirty, Seaton thirty-four ; but of the three events left, only one, the quarter, could be counted safely Seaton's, and the other two might yield a big addition to the Hillbury score. It was in the present event that the games must be won. Eager and fearful, he took his fourth and fifth trials. Still behind ! Desperate with disappointment, poor Curtis grasped his hammer for the last time, swung it wildly round, and, with all the strength of his body concentrated in one final, convulsive jerk, sent it flying through the air.

“ Too high ! ” he groaned, as the measurers stretched their tape over the ground. “ I’m done

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for." And so it was. His best throw had given him barely third place. The score now showed a balance for Hillbury of thirty-seven to thirty-five.

Discouraged as they were, the Seatonian cheerers went wild again as Dickinson's tall, familiar form emerged once more upon the track. Not a soul among them doubted for a moment that he would win the race. The Hillburyites themselves had always passed over the event in their most optimistic calculations. Their chances seemed even less now, for Ropes had already failed them, and Willbur had run one hard race in record-making time, and could not be in condition to meet the champion. Dickinson himself gave no attention to his rivals ; he started at his own pace, a little below his maximum, but rapid enough to be discouraging to the other contestants, and went fast and hard, as if he delighted in the speed, and could run the more easily the faster the pace. The runners were close together around the curve ; on the back stretch Willbur forged ahead ; at the end of the stretch Dickinson had barely caught him, and the two swayed into the curve with the Hill-

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bury man on the inside, flying with a sprinter's gait, with every muscle strained, and the strength of every heart-beat thrown recklessly into his speed. In a mass the spectators, Seaton and Hillbury, rose to their feet, and in a spontaneous, discordant howl, that defied the control of leaders, hurled encouragement and applause at the struggling pair. Around the curve the blue still gained ; at the opening of the straightaway, still led by two yards. Then, as the long strides began to creep up behind him, the plucky half-miler's pace suddenly slackened ; he staggered and fell his length upon the track. While kindly arms lifted him and bore him away, the tall Seatonian swept on to the finish, and four seconds later Ropes and Watson came trailing in.

There was furious cheering when the figures of the new record appeared on the board,—cheering, too, that warms the heart as well as deafens the ears, for Seaton cheered first for their captain and then for Willbur, whose desperate attempt had driven Dickinson to his best ; and Hillbury cheered Willbur and then Dickinson. Both sides felt the better for this mutual polite-

## THE GREAT TRACK MEET

ness ; but the freshly posted score, Hillbury thirty-nine, Seaton forty-one, and the advent of the pole-vaulters, soon brought the eager partisans back to a consciousness of their rivalry.

The bar went up by the slow, tiresome intervals familiar to spectators of such games,— nine feet three, nine feet eight, nine feet nine. At ten feet Varrell and Phillippe of Hillbury alone remained in the contest, a Hillbury man having gained third place. Both men vaulted ten feet two, but at ten three Varrell failed, and Phillippe managed to wriggle over. Hillbury had added six points to her score, making forty-five to Seaton's forty-three.

And now for the final contest to determine whether Hillbury was to keep the lead to the end ! There was a sober conference at the Seaton quarters as Dick and Benson came forth. It was short, for there was really nothing to say. Seaton must gain first place to tie, — first and another to win. McGee of Hillbury had a record of five feet eight and a half ; Dick had never jumped more than five feet seven. The odds were against him and against Seaton. If he

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lost, it would be the critical event which he was losing, and the splendid work of Todd and Dickinson and others would go for nothing.

"Keep up your courage, Dicky, my boy," whispered Curtis. "You've beaten him once about the protest; you can do him up again. He's afraid of you, don't forget that! Keep ahead of him and he'll go to pieces."

That this was foolish talk, Dick knew well, but in some way it gave him heart, and the strong cheering from Seaton benches steadied him. He went over the lower heights with ease, McGee as successfully, though with less grace. At five four Dick was the only Seaton man left in the contest, while there were still two contestants wearing the blue. At five five he and McGee were alone. The bar now went up half an inch at a time, and as often as Melvin cleared the new height a shout of relief would rise from the Seaton benches, echoed again by Hillbury when McGee duplicated the jump. At five feet seven McGee failed, but succeeded the second time. At five seven and a half Melvin also failed at first, but cleared on a second trial, and McGee

## THE GREAT TRACK MEET

wriggled over, touching the bar, but luckily not knocking it off. He fell in a heap in the pit of soft earth behind the uprights, but was up again in a moment, seemingly unhurt.

The bar was placed at five feet eight.

"If he fails on that, we're done for," said Curtis in Todd's ear; "and he can't do it; it's beyond him."

"Stop your croaking!" retorted Todd. "I say he can."

Melvin paced his distance in absolute silence. The leaders of the cheering had abandoned their duties, and like the rest of the eager crowd were intent on the jumper, their hearts in sympathy leaping with him.

And while the crowd watched his every motion, Melvin himself saw nothing but the bar ahead of him with the white handkerchief upon it, and the height and the distance, and the infinite desirability of clearing the white handkerchief and the bar without moving them from their resting-place. A short, nervous run, with his eyes fixed on the bar; a crouch like that of the panther springing for its prey; and up he

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floated and over the white square as if five feet eight were an easy stint, and his legs adjusted themselves automatically to the bar.

That jump settled the contests, for McGee failed three times and was out; and the score remained a tie. Seatonians and Hillburyites alike sent forth victorious yells, and then, lapsing into silence, went their respective ways, wondering whether they were really victors or vanquished. And only such as had prizes in their hands were sure that the day had not gone against them.

"Hi, Dick!" yelled Tompkins from the end of the corridor, as Melvin came upstairs to his room. "You did it, after all!"

"We did and we didn't," answered Dick, lingering in his doorway. "Perhaps we ought to be satisfied, for it seems to me that the Hillbury team was really the better one."

"Then I was right."

"About what?" asked Dick, whose mind was oblivious to all the happenings of the day except those of the last few hours.

"Why, about what I said this morning. Hillbury was the better team, and yet you didn't lose."

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"That's a fact," said Dick, his face breaking into a smile.

"The next time don't call a man crazy just because he comes from Montana," pursued Tompkins, with an air of seriousness. "He may have a prophetic vision."

### THE FINAL SCORE OF THE GAMES

	HILLBURY	SEATON
100 Yards Dash . . . .	5	3
880 Yards Run . . . .	7	1
Putting the Shot . . . .	0	8
120 Yards Hurdle . . . .	2	6
220 Yards Dash . . . .	2	6
Mile Run . . . .	5	3
Broad Jump . . . .	6	2
220 Yards Hurdle . . . .	3	5
Hammer Throw . . . .	7	1
440 Yards Run . . . .	2	6
Pole Vault . . . .	6	2
High Jump . . . .	3	5
Total . . . . .	48	48

First place counting 5 points, second 2, and third 1.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE HILLBURY GAME

ON the following Monday Mr. Moore waited on the Principal in great agitation.

“I am in despair about little Eddy,” said he. “It seems as though I could not endure that miserable, white, vacant face in my room another day. He has done no work worthy of the name in a fortnight, and I see no way of making him do any.”

“You have talked with him about it, I suppose?” suggested Mr. Graham.

“Repeatedly, and with all the tact I possess. I have tried to win his confidence by kindness; I have expostulated with him, I have threatened him, I have ridiculed him; I have given him long tasks to write out: nothing that I can say or do has the slightest effect on the little mule. Sometimes I think he is actuated by a feeling

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of personal malice toward me, and the thought makes me so nervous that I can hardly conduct my recitation."

Mr. Graham smiled: "You have no ground for that feeling, I am sure, for similar reports have come to me from other teachers." He paused a moment, and his expression became sombre as he went on: "The boy has evidently something very serious on his mind. I will talk with him myself. Do you know whether he is still intimate with Bosworth? You have a high opinion of Bosworth, I believe."

Mr. Moore hesitated, and, passing over the question, replied to the suggestion: "I used to have; since I caught him writing composition exercises for Marks, I do not feel so sure about him. Still, he does his work for me in a way that I cannot complain of."

"Do you think he could be guilty of the thieving from rooms that is going on in Carter and Hale?"

"Thieving! I should hope not! Do you suspect him?"

"I do and I don't," replied Mr. Graham, wea-

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rily. "He spends more money than any boy ought to spend who is receiving help from the school. On two occasions at least, when money was taken, I satisfied myself that he might have done it, but I had no direct evidence against him, not even enough to warrant calling him up and questioning him about it. Meantime the thieving still goes on. There was another case in Hale on Saturday."

Mr. Moore looked solemn. "What a scandal! It ought certainly to be stopped, even if we have to employ detectives. Could you not introduce a detective of youthful appearance as a new boy?"

The Principal shook his head. "New boys don't enter school on the first of June. Besides, I am opposed on principle to such methods. This is a crime by a boy against boys. The boys by their carelessness and negligence are partially responsible for what has occurred. They can and ought to ferret out the offender themselves."

"I'm afraid you will accomplish little if you rely on the coöperation of boys," said Mr. Moore, as he rose to go. "They always stand by one another and cover up one another's sins. At

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any rate, don't suspect poor Bosworth until you have incontrovertible proof. The worst thing I know against him is his intimacy with that little wretch, Eddy."

The interview between Eddy and the Principal was very unsatisfactory. Early in the course of it the boy lapsed into tears, and his answers were interjected between sobs that shook his own frail body and wrung the master's heart. He did his best for Mr. Moore; he was not well and had not been for weeks. No, he hadn't anything on his mind. He shouldn't be sorry if he were sent home; he didn't care for the school or the boys in it, except one.

"Bosworth?" suggested Mr. Graham, gently.

"No, sir," replied the boy, emphatically, an expression of repugnance flitting over his face. "I mean Phil Poole. He's the only one who has ever been kind to me."

With this leading to follow, the Principal relaxed the sternness of his method, and pleaded with the boy to open his heart frankly, with full confidence that he would be treated kindly and fairly. More tears, more violent sobs, more con-

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vulsive protestations of innocence. Either Eddy would tell nothing, or he had nothing to tell.

The next morning, in chapel, Mr. Graham expressed the indignation he felt that sneak thievery in the dormitories should continue, and reminded the boys that they shared with him the responsibility for the conduct of the school. The admonition was hardly necessary, for the students were already thoroughly aroused. They discussed the cases from every side, and uttered vague and terrible threats as to what would be done with the malefactor if they once got him in their hands. The discussion yielded no result except to bring the names of a dozen innocent lads into temporary disrepute; and threats, as Varrell disconsolately remarked to Melvin, are of no use when addressed to no one in particular.

“Hillbury day” came. For the last fortnight the nine had been playing a steady game, which, if not brilliant, was at least thoroughly good; and the school, having shaken itself clear of the wavering mood in which hope and fear seesaw up and down with every fresh rumor from the

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rival diamond, had settled finally into a cautiously sanguine frame of mind. There were still some who spoke with disapproval of the favoritism which displaced a veteran and put a young boy like Poole into an important field ; but among this small number the generally rampant patriotism proved too strong for personal prejudice. Even Marks, whose baseball lingo would have discouraged a sporting editor, and who asserted that the "kid would queer the gang" — even silly, slangy, sporting Marks only half believed what he said, and was really quite willing that the fielder should distinguish himself, if this was necessary to the success of the team.

The crowd poured into the campus that afternoon as if there were no end to it. Word had gone forth that the nine had a "show to win," and the younger graduates thronged the regular trains. As Dick, clutching proudly his cheer-leader's baton, walked along the line of seats to the centre section, where the cheering force was clustered, he caught glimpses of familiar faces of old boys smiling down at him from among

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the rows of straw hats and gay parasols. He recognized Varrell perched on the topmost bench, and shook his baton at him in a vain effort to attract his notice. But Varrell's attention was elsewhere, and Dick got no return for his demonstration except a scowl from Bosworth, who occupied a seat halfway up, at the edge of the entrance passage. Presently the nines appeared, and in the din of yells and the confusion of waving banners, Dick's whole attention was devoted to following Planter's leadership and keeping his own side of the section in proper time.

While the Hillbury nine was taking its practice, Melvin slipped over to the players' bench for a last word with Tompkins and Poole, and was delighted to find them both cool and determined.

"How I'm feeling? Bully!" replied Tompkins. "If only I knew how to pitch, I could do wonders to-day."

"Give us your best, that's good enough for us," returned the senior, clapping him on the shoulder.

"I'm going to put up my best bluff, anyway,"

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answered Tommy. "If I fail, it won't be because I don't try."

"Don't let 'em rattle you," urged Melvin.

"You needn't worry about that," put in Phil. "This pitcher doesn't rattle."

Just then the umpire called the game, and Melvin hurried back to his charge. Hillbury took the field. Millan, after leisurely rubbing the new ball in the grass beside the pitcher's box, while his friends were roaring encouraging cheers, put in a hot one over the corner of the plate. "One strike!" The next was a ball; the third Vincent struck at and raised a high foul, gathered in by the first baseman. Robinson hit at the first ball pitched, and dropped an easy fly in the centre-fielder's reach; Watson went out ignominiously on strikes; and the Hillbury team came trotting smilingly in, quite satisfied that they deserved the three long ringing Hillburys thrown at them by a grateful constituency.

The red letters scattered to their places. Stevens, who headed the Hillbury list, went to bat with an appearance of confidence and power. But his bold air belied his real feelings. Nervous

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and uncertain, he let the first ball pass and heard it called a strike, struck foolishly at the second, which was out of his reach, and then, after a ball had been called, hit a slow bounder to the pitcher. Hood, who followed, did not touch the ball, though he struck hard at it thrice; and Franklin dropped a weak fly into Robinson's hands. Seaton came in for their second inning after a short five minutes in the field. "Poole up!" Phil picked out his favorite bat, fixed his feet firmly on the ground, and boldly facing the pitcher, tried to forget that this was the Hillbury game, and to see in the man before him, not the redoubtable Millan, but a practice pitcher whose balls were easy if closely watched. The first was wide, the second too low; the third he caught squarely and drove it over the uncovered second base into the out-field. It was the first hit of the game, and the Seatonians noised their joy abroad in a splendid "hullabaloo."

And now, in addition to the senseless exhortations of the fielders: "Right at 'em now!" "Right in the middle of the big mitt!" "Put it over, old

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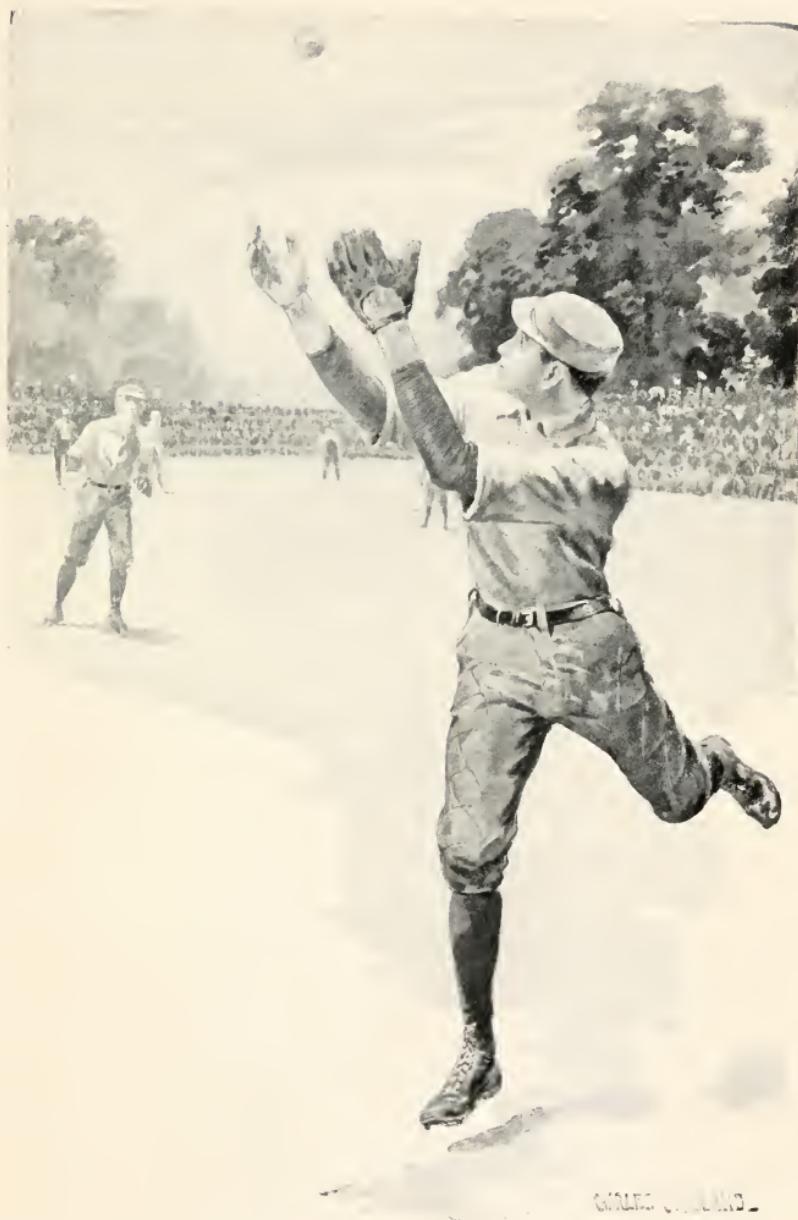
boy!" were heard the yells of the coacher, whose object usually seems to be to confuse the pitcher rather than to help the base-runner. Phil clung to first while Sudbury struck twice and then went out on a long fly, and Sands hit a pop foul that the third baseman easily caught. With two men out, Phil started on the first pitch to steal second. That he was successful was due as much to the catcher's high throw as to his own speed, for the second baseman had to jump for the ball, and while he was in the air Phil slid safely in to the base. A good single now would bring in the run, and the Seatonians, with a silent eagerness that the cheer-leaders did not try to interrupt, waited to see if Waddington would meet their hopes. "One strike! One ball! Two balls! Two strikes!" and Waddington cracked out a pretty liner over third that brought Poole home and put the batsman on second. Hayes went out on a grounder to short-stop.

Hillbury came in determined to hit the ball. Ribot drove a hard bounder to third, where Watson trapped the ball on the ground and fielded cleanly to first. Kleindienst went out on strikes,

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and Haley, after three balls had been called, hit a long fly to left-field that looked to be a three-base hit. Phil was off with the hit, racing for the spot where the ball was to fall, and sure, after his first glance over his shoulder, that he would be able to reach it. But the crowd was not so sure, and when at the end of his run he suddenly turned and pulled the ball down, a howl of applause rose from the Seaton benches that for the moment made the cheer-leaders seem quite useless ornaments. As Dick stood waiting for this outburst to pass, he glanced curiously along the tiers of eager faces, and suddenly became conscious that one spectator seemed to have no share in the general delight. Untouched by the excitement raging about him, Bosworth sat darkly glowering out over the diamond, a melancholy island in a heaving sea of joy.

The third inning passed without changing the score. In the fourth, Watson and Poole went out on in-field hits, and Sudbury was left at second when Sands struck out. Hillbury began well when Hood got his base on balls; if Franklin disappointed his friends by sending a fly to



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He suddenly turned and pulled the ball down.—*Page 292.*



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short-stop, Ribot made up for the failure by driving the second ball pitched in a straight line over the first baseman's head. By the time Vincent got it back, Hood had crossed the plate, and Ribot stood, exulting, on third base.

The Hillburyites were on their feet, oblivious of cheer-leaders and programme, howling their pride and hope. The score was tied! A hit, an error, a long fly, would let Ribot in, and put Hillbury in the lead. Tompkins was watching Ribot out of the corner of his eye, but his whole mind was concentrated on the problem of putting the ball just where it was required. Unworried, but more deliberate than ever, he responded to Sands's signals. "One strike! one ball! a foul! two balls! two strikes!" The eager Seatonians began to breathe more easily. A strike-out would improve the situation vastly.

Sands signalled for a slow high ball over the inside corner. Tompkins shook his head, but Sands repeated the signal and the pitcher obeyed. The ball came true, but Kleindienst, fearing a called strike, waited until it was near him and then slashed recklessly at it. Almost simulta-

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neously Phil heard the crack of the bat, saw the ball rising high above the second baseman's head, and felt his heart sink with a sudden stab of pain. The fly was so far out that, even if Sudbury caught it, it would be next to impossible for him to return the ball in time to hold the runner on third.

And so it proved. Sudbury got the fly after a hard run, turned quickly, and sent it hot to the second baseman, who lined it home; but Ribot was across the plate by ten feet when the ball came to rest in Sands's grasp.

Wildly as the Hillburyites yelled, Seaton matched them cheer for cheer, shouting to keep their courage up and show the nine men in the field that their schoolfellows were not despondent. Haley struck twice, then lifted the ball over Hayes's head into short left-field. Phil had a sharp run to get under the ball, but he took it safely enough, and then, though the three men were out, he set himself for a throw and sent it in to the home plate. Sands had to go forward a step to meet it. "A little longer next time," thought Phil, as he trotted in. "I can do it if necessary."

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Seaton's half of the fifth inning was soon over. Waddington went out on a high foul, Hayes on a fly to left-field, and Tommy very tamely on strikes. When Webster stepped up to the plate to lead off for Hillbury, more than one timid Seatonian felt a mysterious foreboding that this was to prove a fatal inning. Webster thought so too, for he waited bravely until two balls had been called, and then drove a beautiful liner over the second baseman's head, that only a brilliant stop by Vincent prevented from being a three-base hit. Webster rested at first. The Hillburyites brandished their arms and whooped ; while the Seaton in-fielders spat on their gloves and braced themselves for great deeds, encouraging Tommy meantime to "Be right there with the goods!" and "Put 'em straight over, old man!" Whether Tompkins profited by these admonitions it would be hard to say ; he certainly did his prettiest to "deliver the goods," conscious that every pitch was a critical one.

"One strike ! three balls !" Cunningham waited, hoping for a chance to "walk." "Two strikes !" The batsman gathered himself for

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his last chance and smote hard at the ball, but succeeded only in sending a grounder to the pitcher. Tompkins turned and threw deliberately to second base, where Webster was forced out, though Robinson was not quick enough to catch the man at first. Still, one man was out, and the spectators were encouraged.

Millan came to bat, glaring defiance at the Seaton pitcher. The first one looked promising, and he swung hard at it. The Seatonians heard the crack, had a momentary impression of the ball going like a rifle-shot toward first base, saw Waddington put his hands together, stagger, and dart for first,—and after an instant understood that the fifth inning had ended suddenly with a double play.

As Dick turned round to do his part in leading the cheers for “Waddy,” he caught a glimpse of Bosworth climbing down from his place into the passage that led to the rear of the seats. In the excitement of the scene, Melvin would hardly have noticed this departure of a single member of the disorderly crowd, had not the last look that the fellow cast along the benches had in it

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an element of fear and stealth that drew his attention as the glint of distant water reflecting the sunlight catches the eye of the mountaineer. An absorbing suspicion, which made even the game seem of secondary interest, suddenly possessed his mind. Hastily turning over his baton to one of his fellow-leaders, with an explanation that did not explain, Melvin pushed his way to the rear of the crowd that thronged the entrance passage through which Bosworth had just gone. There was his man thirty yards away, walking toward the entrance to the grounds!

The senior halted, turned back into the enclosure, and ran his eye along the benches to Varrell's seat. "He's gone!" he muttered in dismay. "Just my cursed luck! And I can't stop to hunt him up!" He waited a moment longer, sweeping the tiers of seats with his eye in vain search for his missing friend; then he turned back again into the passage, and watched Bosworth out of the grounds.

At the gate Bosworth stopped and exchanged a few words with the man on duty. "They are asking him about the score," thought Dick; "I

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wonder how he explains his sudden leaving." As Bosworth passed out of sight down the street, Dick set off on a run for the gate.

"Was that Bosworth, Mike?" he panted, as he hailed the gatekeeper.

"I dunno the feller at all. I just axed him how the game was goin' and he said two to wan fer Hillbury."

"Was that all?" asked Dick, disappointed.

"No, sir, I axed him what inning, and he said the ind of the fift'; and I said how cud ye lave a close game like that right in the middle av it, and he said the strain was too much for his nerves. But they's a chance for the byes yit, ain't they?"

"I think so," replied Dick, absently. He was contrasting the utter indifference stamped on Bosworth's face as he sat among the enthusiasts, with this tale of nervous agitation. "Whose wheel is that?" he demanded abruptly, pointing to a bicycle leaning against the fence.

"Mine," said Mike.

"Will you lend it to me for an hour?" went on Melvin, eagerly. "I've a very important errand to do."

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“Shure!” said Mike. The word was hardly out of his mouth before Melvin had seized the bicycle and was running it across the street. Mike and his comrade watched the student whip the machine through the yard opposite, over a wire fence, and across another lawn to a second street, where he mounted and sprinted off.

“He’s a devil to hustle, that bye,” remarked Mike. “Ye ought to see him kick a futball. *He* don’t hurry then, wan bit. It’s the ball does the hurryin’.”

## CHAPTER XXV

### ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

BY following Lincoln Street and the path through the Seminary yard, Dick covered two sides of a triangle much more quickly than the pedestrian could the third side, the direct road from campus to academy. He leaned the bicycle against the gymnasium wall out of sight, and crept into the shelter of the high steps of Carter, whence he could command a view of the dormitories without being seen himself. Never had the old academy yard worn such an air of silence and desuetude. Old Robeson was raking the driveway on the other side of the gymnasium; the Saturday cleaners were buried in the depths of the recitation building. Except for the indescribable roar of distant cheering, which came in bursts from the direction of the campus, or the noise of an occasional wagon

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

rattling along the street, the green-turfed yard might have been some silent meadow afar from the haunts of men.

"Every dormitory window open!" thought Dick, as he glanced around the yard, "and half the doors too, I'll bet. Those fellows really deserve to lose some of their things. But what a cinch for a thief!"

Some minutes passed before Bosworth appeared on the street and turned leisurely into the yard. When he reached the point where the path divided, he hesitated an instant before turning away from his own dormitory toward the middle entry of Hale. At the Hale steps he stopped again, threw a hurried glance over the yard, and disappeared into the dormitory entry. A moment later Dick was scuttling along the driveway toward the corner of Hale.

Hardly had he gained the shelter of the dormitory wall and begun to creep along beneath the windows toward the middle entry, when a sudden apparition at the farther corner drew from his lips an exclamation of wonder which would certainly have betrayed him if Bosworth

## MAKING THE NINE

had been near enough to hear it. There was Varrell, quietly working his way along the wall from the other direction, his face flushed red as if from a long hard run, but showing not the slightest surprise at this meeting with his confederate. They came together at the entrance, where Varrell, checking with an unmistakable gesture Melvin's obvious intention to ask questions, crept stealthily in and crouched against the wall under the stairs. His friend followed close after.

“Shoes off!” whispered Varrell, with lips close to Dick's ear. The order was obeyed without question. Varrell placed his straw hat beside his shoes; Dick imitated him.

“Can you hear him?” came in a second whisper.

Dick listened: at first absolute silence; then the sound from the second floor of a door being carefully shut, followed by the scrape of a sole upon the marble staircase above; then the click of a door-knob, and silence again.

“He's just left a room in the second story and gone up to one in the third,” whispered Dick.

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

"Now is our time," announced Varrell, and led the way up. Their steps were noiseless on the solid stone. The doors to both suites on the third floor were closed.

"Which?" whispered Varrell. Never had he envied his classmate's quick hearing as at this very instant.

Dick applied his ear to the door on the right. He could dimly hear the distant cheering, a formless, threatening sound drifting in through the open windows of the room, like the far-away roar of an angry mob. Within the room all was silent.

He shook his head and tiptoed to the other door. Here too his ear at first detected no sound that did not come from without, but presently he heard footsteps on the other side of the room, and a grating noise as from the opening of a drawer.

"He's here," said Melvin's lips. His nod and gesture would have told the story to a fool. Varrell motioned him aside and gently turned the knob. The door moved slightly on its hinges.

## MAKING THE NINE

“Ready?” queried Varrell’s eyes. Dick nodded, and Varrell threw wide the door. There stood the long pursued, before the open drawer of a dressing table, with a pair of gold cuff-buttons in his hand.

Bosworth gave a start and wheeled round upon the intruders. He uttered no sound, but his eyes took on a wild, frightened look, while his shallow face faded to a paler shade and the red line of his lips became a whitish blue, as he faced the fierce looks of his two pursuers.

“So we’ve caught the thief at last,” said Varrell, sternly, “this time in the very act.”

Bosworth moistened his lips. “If you think I’m a thief, you’re greatly mistaken,” he began, rolling his eyes from side to side like a person searching for ideas under a great strain.

“We don’t think; we know,” answered Varrell. “There’s stolen property right in your hand.”

For a moment Bosworth hesitated, looking down. When he lifted his eyes again he was ready with an explanation. “I was just looking at them. I came in here to get a trot I lent

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

to Morton. I couldn't stand the strain of the game, so I decided to come back and work. I thought probably the door would be unlocked, and I could get the book for myself. I opened the drawer to see if the book was there,—it isn't the kind of thing a fellow would show on his study table,—the buttons caught my eye, and I took them up out of curiosity."

"Huh!" snorted Varrell, "and what about that scarf-pin on the table?"

"I know nothing about any scarf-pin," replied Bosworth, with a show of resentment. "If there's a scarf-pin on the table, I suppose Morton left it there. The fact that it's there shows I'm not a thief; I should have taken it if I had been."

Dick's conviction began to weaken. It all sounded very natural and plausible. Had Wrenn's infatuation put them both into a false position? He turned to Bosworth. "If what you say is true, we have done you a great injustice. You say you came here for the book. Did you come directly here?"

"Certainly."

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“Without going to any other room?”

“Of course not,” replied Bosworth, impatiently. “Didn’t I say I wanted the trot?”

A glance of intelligence flashed from Dick’s face to Varrell’s.

“He’s lying,” said Varrell, coolly. “We’ll have to wait till more fellows come, when we’ll search him and search his room.”

A look of apprehension appeared on Bosworth’s face. “You have no right to search me,” he cried. “I won’t stand it.”

“We’ll see!” was Varrell’s laconic answer.

A leisurely step now made itself heard on the stairs below, and soon the surprised face of little Eddy appeared on the landing outside.

“How’s the game going?” cried Dick, suddenly bethinking himself that the great contest was still on.

“I don’t know,” answered the boy, in sullen tones, peering curiously into the room. “I haven’t been to the game. I’ve been up the river.”

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m going up to my room.”

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

"Well, go on then," commanded Varrell. Eddy started on. "Eddy!" called Bosworth.

With a hasty movement, quite unlike the indolent slouch with which he had crawled upstairs, Eddy hurried back and stood in the doorway, expectant, his big eyes full of fear, his whole expression that of a dog cringing before a cruel master. The sight stirred Dick to the depths of his heart. If ever he had felt a doubt as to Varrell's course, or a lurking suspicion, born of his sense of fair play, that Bosworth might after all be a comparatively innocent victim of appearances, the doubt and suspicion vanished in the presence of that abject figure, like raindrops on the surface of the sea.

"I'd like to speak to him a moment," said Bosworth, nervously.

"No, you don't!" cried Dick. "You've had your last speech with him."

"Oh, let them talk," said Varrell, giving his friend a sharp look. "Only nothing must pass between you," he added, turning again to Bosworth. "If you are willing to back up against the wall there and have the boy stand at one

## MAKING THE NINE

side so that there's a clear open space between you, and both face this way, we'll go out in the entry out of hearing, and watch you through the door from a distance. Otherwise there had better be no conversation until after the search is over."

Bosworth agreed to the terms ; Varrell stationed the two as he wanted them, — Bosworth in the best light, — and with Dick withdrew to the entry, where Varrell planted himself and fixed his eyes on the faces of the whispering pair in a long intense stare. Dick understood well the game his friend was playing, and his own eyes wandered helplessly from the observer to the observed, trying to guess from Wrenn's expression his success in reading Bosworth's lips, fearful of failure as the thief gradually bent his head in Eddy's direction.

" Face this way ! " cried Varrell.

" We're through now," replied Bosworth.

" Eddy, go up and stand on the stairs in sight till we call you down," ordered Varrell. Then in a low tone to Dick he added : " Keep him there a jiffy till I can put on my shoes and get

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

ahead of him to Bosworth's room. Hang to Bosworth like grim death. Don't let the fellow get away."

"You can trust him to me," answered Dick, eagerly. "What luck?"

"I can't tell yet," returned Wrenn.

Two minutes later Eddy was allowed to go, and sauntered leisurely down the first flight of stairs; the second he took more rapidly. At the dormitory entrance he broke into a run, which he maintained up the stairs to Bosworth's threshold. The door was unlocked,—Bosworth had no fear of thieves,—and inside sat Varrell!

"Shut the door, can't you?" was the senior's sharp greeting to the amazed lad. "Now, what did you come here for? Out with it and don't try to lie, for I shall catch you if you do."

Eddy gaped helplessly around.

"His—knife," he stammered, between gasps.

"Don't lie to me!" said Varrell, sternly.  
"What did he tell you to get in the closet?"

"Nothing."

Varrell jerked open the closet door, ran his hand over the clothing hung on the hooks, gave

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the shoes on the floor a kick, and pulled down an empty pasteboard box from the shelf. Then he turned to Eddy.

“Look here, boy,” he said in a gentler tone, “Bosworth is a thief and a rascal, as you are perfectly well aware. You’d better tell what you know, and save your own skin while you can.”

“I haven’t anything to tell.”

Eddy’s lips were trembling, and his eyes promised tears, but his face still wore the expression of stubborn determination.

“The little fool!” groaned Varrell, turning away. “He’s too thoroughly terrorized to let anything out. And to think that we are so near the goal and can’t quite reach it! If only the villain had not moved his head when he did! Yellow book! I could have sworn he said ‘yellow book in the closet,’ but there’s no yellow book in the closet or anywhere else!”

He opened the closet door once more, and stumbled over one of the shoes he had contemptuously kicked a minute before. In a burst of irritation he stooped to pick up the shoe and

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

throw it where it would trouble him no more. As he lifted it into plainer view, its color caught his eye and his arm paused in mid-air. "What a blunderer!" he ejaculated. "It was 'boot,' not 'book'; how could I have made such an error!"

Eddy stood mute, staring with anxious, fascinated face, as the senior ran his hand into the shoe, turned it over, shook it, and threw it down. He stooped for the other, inverted it, and tapped it upon the floor; then rose and felt carefully inside, while he fixed his eyes on the trembling boy.

"There seems to be paper here," he said slowly, "or at any rate something like it that is fitted close to the lining of the upper." The next moment he had dropped the shoe, and was unfolding a small, square piece of paper. It was the check stolen from the office safe on the night of March seventh!

Varrell's first impulse was to let out a yell of triumph that would make the whole dormitory entry ring; his second, to make sure that his triumph was real. There was no question of the identity of the check; he had heard too much

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about the details of the case to have any doubt on that score. But would not a skilled liar like Bosworth be able to squirm out of even a predicament like this?

The senior turned again to Eddy, who was now leaning upon the table, his head buried in his arms, weeping in great despairing sobs. "I see how it is," said Varrell, sternly. "You learned the combination and induced Bosworth to steal the money; he divided it with you, and when this was spent you stole from the rooms."

"It isn't so!" sobbed the boy. "I never stole a cent in my life. Bosworth did it all! I told him of the combination,—and that's all I had to do with it. I didn't know he stole it till long after, when he told me that the money he'd lent me had come from the safe, and I'd be arrested too if he was caught. But I never stole a thing in my whole life—and I've paid him almost up, too. Oh, I'm so unhappy! What will my mother do, if I have to go to jail!"

Varrell laid his hand gently on the lad's quivering shoulder. The inquisitor's heart was touched.

## ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF HALE

"You won't go to jail at all if you brace up and make a clean breast of the whole thing," said the senior. "You haven't done anything wrong, except to cover up another's villainy."

He waited quietly for the sobs to slacken, with his hand still on Eddy's shoulder. And while he waited, there smote upon his ear from the direction of the campus another roar, tumultuous and long drawn out, that rose and subsided and rose again, like the howl of the northwest wind on a winter night.

"Their game is over, too," mused Varrell. "I wonder if they have had our luck."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A DOUBLE ASSIST

AND now for the finish of the game. When Dick and Varrell made their hurried exit from the field, the sixth inning was just under way, each team beginning over again at the head of its batting list. The cheering that Dick had heard while he was waiting at the steps of Carter was provoked by the successful retirement of the first three Hillbury batters. The three men who headed the Seaton list had already gone out in order. With a balance of one in the score in favor of Hillbury, and hits few and far between, the visitors' confidence was growing. Every additional zero in the Seaton score now meant another nail in the Seaton coffin.

The seventh began with Poole at the bat. The first ball was a little wide for him, but he

## A DOUBLE ASSIST

thought he could utilize it, and chopped a little liner over the short-stop's head. When Sudbury came up, Ribot had his pitcher throw two balls in the hope of tempting Phil to try to steal second. Then came a strike and another ball. With three balls called, Phil started on the next pitch with the pitcher's arm on the old chance of hit and run. Sudbury bunted, and got his base on Ribot's wild throw to first, while Phil made second easily. This was a business-like beginning that stirred anew the sluggish Seaton throats!

Sands came up to the plate. Did ever captain face such an opportunity! A single would tie the score, a two-base hit would probably win the game. A grounder in the wrong place might result in a double play and the loss of the start this made. Sands did his best, but his best was only a slow grounder toward third, and he sped away to first without much hope of reaching there. Phil had taken a good lead from second, and dashed past Kleindienst, the Hillbury third baseman, just before the latter got the ball and shot it across the diamond to first. Sands was out,

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but both Phil and Sudbury had advanced a base.

“Can he do it?” said Tompkins, as Waddington faced the pitcher.

“Do what?” asked Hayes, who was stamping the ground with his foot and nervously swinging the bat in his hand.

“Anything but strike out or hit to the in-field,” replied Tompkins. “If he makes a hit, we win the game,—if he doesn’t, we lose. We shan’t get another chance like this.”

Waddington waited until two strikes and three balls had been called. At the next one he let drive with all his power.

“It’s a homer, it’s a homer!” shouted Tompkins, jumping up and down in glee.

“No, a three-bagger,” corrected Hayes, wildly flourishing his bat dangerously near Tompkins’s head.

But it was neither. Far out in the tennis courts that bounded centre-field Franklin threw himself at the flying ball, and clung tight to it, though he fell his length on the ground. He recovered himself and got the ball back in season

## A DOUBLE ASSIST

to hold Sudbury at third, but Phil had crossed the plate.

There was babel now on both sides of the diamond, Seaton cheering the run that tied the score, Hillbury, the brilliant achievement of their fielder.

Hayes was next in order. "Just a little hit, Haysey," pleaded Tompkins. "Over second will do. Make a hit and I will."

Hayes's response was to whack the ball over third baseman's head for two bases. Sudbury came in with the third run, and Tompkins went out ingloriously by batting an easy ball to the pitcher. The Seaton half of the inning was over, with the score now three to two in her favor.

Hillbury got no farther than third in her half. In the eighth the batsmen on both sides went down like pins before a bowling ball. The pitchers were on their mettle, every player was alert and keen, chance itself seemed to bring the hits into the fielders' hands. Cunningham sprinted twenty feet to take Robinson's liner; Watson gathered in a foul right in the midst of

## MAKING THE NINE

the Hillbury benches ; Hayes made a one-handed stop of what promised to be a three-base hit. The in-field no longer wasted breath in exhortations ; the cheer-leaders no longer tried to lead. The crowd was left to follow its own excited inclination, and incoherent yells took the place of cheers and songs.

The ninth began under the same spell of fast play. Poole went out on a fly to first base, Sudbury struck out, Sands hit to second base, and Hillbury came in for her last chance. Ribot sent a fly well over in short left-field, but Watson ran back and caught it. Kleindienst hit over the second baseman's head ; Haley dropped a fly in short right-field, and took second while Vincent was trying to catch the runner at third. With only one man out, and runners at second and third, the Hillbury cause looked bright. The blue banners waved wildly ; but the Hillbury leaders brought back their companies once more to the old cheers, and gave Webster a ringing volley as he stepped up to the plate, bat in hand. Into every heart over the whole field, among players and audience alike, crept the conviction

## A DOUBLE ASSIST

that the two runs necessary to give the victory to Hillbury were coming in, and that Webster's hit was to bring them.

Phil drew in nearer the diamond. He knew Webster's batting record like a book,—the notebook he had kept so long. If Webster made a hit at all, it would be in short left-field, out of reach of both third and short-stop.

Crack! went the bat. The Hillburyites rose and sent forth their shout of victory, as the ball sailed safely over the third baseman's head. Haley started immediately from second; Klein-dienst, on third, waited a little longer to make sure that Watson would not repeat his previous play. When he, too, saw that the ball was out of Watson's reach, he threw care to the winds and started home, with Haley rounding the base only a dozen feet behind him.

Beyond third neither coaches nor runners thought to look. Sands himself, who had thrown his mask aside and now stood helpless at the plate, steeling himself to bear the sight of those two winning runs which were to transform a game almost won into a game certainly lost,—Sands

## MAKING THE NINE

himself had abandoned hope, and was watching the flight of the ball with indifference, stunned with the bitterness and humiliation of defeat.

Then, as he gazed, an abrupt change came over him. His whole figure grew radiant as with a mighty and unexpected joy. The hit was over the third baseman's head, it was true; but the left-fielder, well within his usual position, had run rapidly forward to meet the ball, taken it on the bounce, steadied himself for a throw, and, with that splendid shoulder drive which Sands had so often envied, sent it straight to the waiting catcher. It came whizzing past the shoulder of the unsuspecting Kleindienst, and landed safely in Sands's mitt. Leisurely, as if there were no chance of error; easily, as if such plays were a matter of everyday practice; with a smile on his lips at the folly of those who feared for him and his team,—the Seaton captain stooped and tagged the first runner as he slid in, then stepped forward to meet the second, plunging at the heels of the first. The two astonished men were out on the throw to the plate, and it was still Seaton's game!

## A DOUBLE ASSIST

The score :—

SEATON		AB	R	BH	TB	PO	A	E
Vincent, r. f.	.	4	0	1	2	1	0	0
Robinson, 2b.	.	4	0	0	0	3	3	0
Watson, 3b.	.	4	0	0	0	2	1	1
Poole, l. f.	.	4	2	2	2	2	2	0
Sudbury, c. f.	.	4	1	1	1	2	0	0
Sands, c.	.	4	0	0	0	7	1	0
Waddington, 1b.	.	3	0	1	2	7	0	0
Hayes, s. s.	.	3	0	1	2	2	2	1
Tompkins, p.	.	3	0	0	0	1	1	0
Totals	.	33	3	6	9	27	9	2

### HILLBURY

Stevens, l. f.	.	4	0	0	0	2	0	0
Hood, s. s.	.	4	1	0	0	0	3	0
Franklin, c. f.	.	4	0	0	0	2	0	0
Ribot, c.	.	4	1	1	3	6	1	2
Kleindienst, 3b.	.	4	0	1	1	2	3	0
Haley, r. f.	.	4	0	1	1	1	0	0
Webster, 1b.	.	4	0	2	2	11	0	0
Cunningham, 2b.	.	3	0	2	3	3	2	1
Millan, p.	.	3	0	0	0	0	2	0
Totals	.	34	2	7	10	27	11	3

INNINGS	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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Seaton	.	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0—3
Hillbury	.	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0—2

Phil did not walk in from the field after that throw. How he came in he could not have told, for the wild horde from the Seaton benches met

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him near third, and heaved him into the air, and fought for him, and hustled him to and fro on the diamond like a hockey puck darting over the ice. When at length he was released, he sought long for Dick and Varrell, sadly disappointed that his two best friends should so unaccountably fail him at the moment of his triumph.

Threatened at last by the waiting players with being seized by force and crammed into the barge, Phil reluctantly abandoned his search and climbed in over the knees of his impatient friends. They drove down, hilarious, through hilarious crowds. No one who has never had the experience can picture to himself the delicious abandon with which a team, after long months of training and suspense, gives itself up to the glorious joy of victory. An exultant fire of explanations, reminders, and compliments ran from one end of the barge to the other.

“Do you know, Phil,” said Sands, giving the boy a hearty slap on the knee, “I never expect to feel again quite such a shock of happiness as I had when I saw the ball light in your claws and start home again with that old ‘gravity rise.’

## A DOUBLE ASSIST

When I felt it in my hands, I could have whooped! And to see that poor Kleindienst come sliding in so sweetly, with the ball there ahead of him, and Haley at his heels, rushing plumb at it,—and both thinking they had won the game! It was rich!"

"How did you get there, anyway, Phillie?" asked Vincent. "You belonged a long way out."

"I knew where he was likely to hit and lay in for him," said Phil, modestly.

"The note-book again!" shouted Tompkins, "the miserable, little, dirty note-book! Why, I pitched the whole game on that book! We ought to have it bound in red morocco and hung up in the trophy case with the ball."

They were just passing the walk that led to the Principal's house, when the twentieth howl of appreciation rolled up to them from a loyal group.

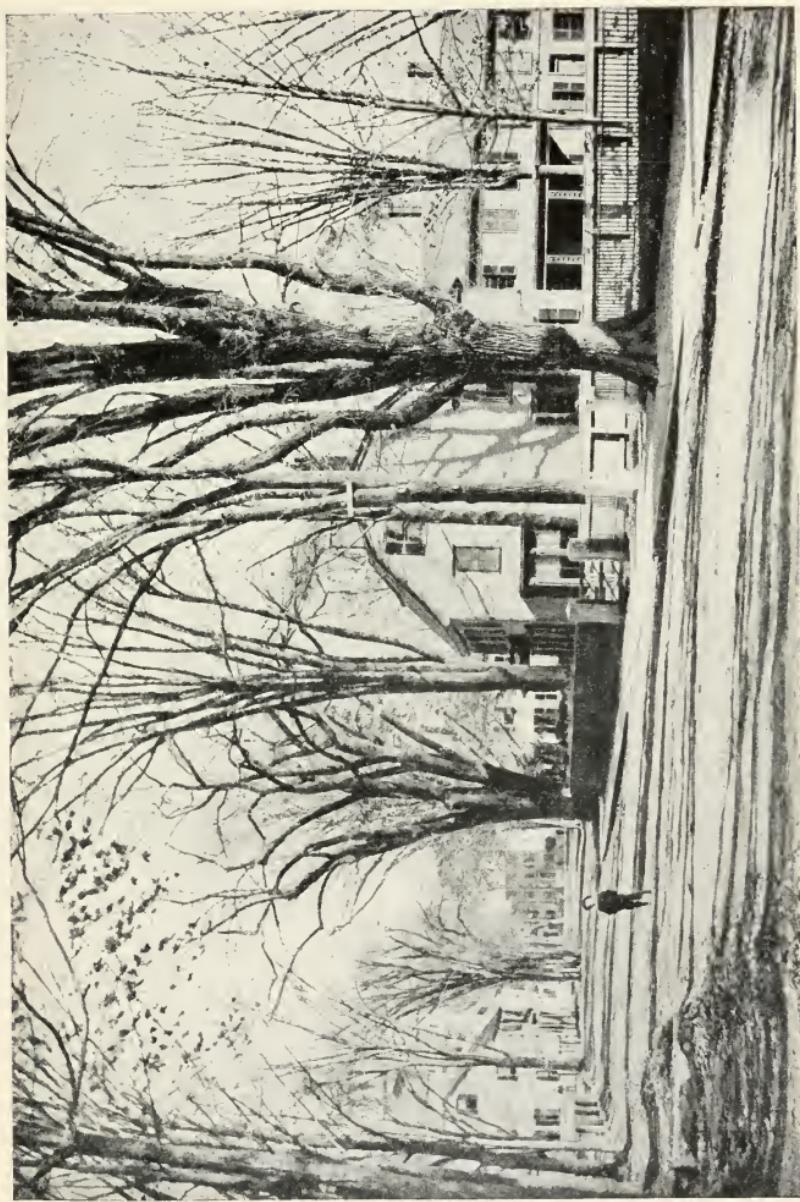
"Look there!" cried Watson. "Did you ever see that combination before? There's aristocrat Varrell and that queer little Eddy ahead, and Dick Melvin and Bosworth behind. Something must have happened to bring those fellows together."

## MAKING THE NINE

At the sound of the cheering Dick wheeled quickly and waved his hand to the victors in the barge, then turned again to his charge. Bosworth did not raise his eyes from the ground.

Tompkins gave Phil a questioning look, and Phil answered with a smile and a nod. He guessed now why his friends had failed him at the field.

The Main Street of Seaton.





## CHAPTER XXVII

### CONCLUSION

DICK sat with his sullen prisoner in the Principal's outer office, while Varrell and Eddy were closeted with Mr. Graham in the smaller room adjoining. The door between was left ajar, and both prisoner and guard strained their ears for some inkling of the course of events in the inner room. Although delighted that the end of the long chase had been reached, Dick was not altogether satisfied with his own position at the finish. He had submissively stood watch while Varrell had made the search in Bosworth's room ; he had obeyed as submissively when Varrell had reappeared and ordered him on with Bosworth to the Principal's house. That he must still be kept on guard just out of hearing of the interesting details which he had a right to know, was exasperating even if unavoidable. With the feeling

## MAKING THE NINE

that he was doing his duty, Dick steeled himself to wait in patience.

Through the crack of the door came the murmur of Varrell's voice, as in low, steady tones he told his story, occasionally interrupted by short, distinct questions from the Principal that Dick could all but understand. Presently Eddy's testimony was invoked. With tremulous lips he sobbed out answers to the senior's questions, like a bashful witness affirming his attorney's suggestions. When Mr. Graham took a part in the questioning, the boy's voice grew yet more nervous and shrill. Words and expressions penetrated to the eager ears in the outer room. Bosworth threw off his pretence of indifference, and sat bolt upright, listening with all his might.

But he was destined to hear little. Eddy's whining voice suddenly shot to a high key, broke, and dwindled abruptly to a gasp and a gurgle. A chair slipped on the smooth floor, and an inert body struck the hard surface with a dull thud. In his nervous state Dick could restrain himself no longer. Throwing police duties to

## CONCLUSION

the winds, he rushed into the inner room, where Mr. Graham and Varrell were bending over Eddy's collapsed form, Varrell still holding the boy's head as he had caught it close to the floor, and the Principal staring in horror at the twitching face.

"It's a fit," Varrell was saying. "I've seen a case like it before; comes from indigestion. You want to loosen his clothes and keep him from biting his tongue."

"Dr. Kenneth at once!" exclaimed Mr. Graham, catching sight of Melvin at his elbow.

Dick hurried back to the room which he had just left. It was empty. He stood an instant, staring blankly at the vacant room, then turned to the others a bewildered face.

"Bosworth's gone!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Shall I—?"

"Get the doctor at once!" repeated Mr. Graham. "Never mind Bosworth!"

The command was explicit, and yet the boy hesitated. His lips came together and parted in "But—." He got no further, however, for

## MAKING THE NINE

Varrell interrupted him before the word was out.

“Hurry up, can’t you! Don’t stop to talk!”

It was the sharp, stinging tone in which the words were spoken and the warning look flashed from Varrell’s gray eyes as he uttered them that sent Dick flying from the house.

In five minutes he was back again, having met the school doctor at the door of his office. Eddy was already reviving.

“Come, let’s get away,” said Varrell, after they had watched operations for a few minutes in silence. “They don’t need us any longer.”

The doors had hardly closed behind them when Melvin began fiercely, “Well?”

“Well, what?” returned Varrell, coolly.

“Why did you make me let that fellow go?”

Varrell laughed. “Because Mr. Graham evidently wanted him to go. He had his wits about him if you had lost yours.”

“But why?” persisted Dick.

“Put yourself in his place and you’ll see,” retorted Varrell. “Bosworth, in the eyes of the law, is a felon. Mr. Graham cannot condone a

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criminal offence, and he doesn't want the scandal of a public trial in the courts. Bosworth has helped us out by running away. He'll never be seen again in this town. Now come up to the room, and I'll tell you all about it."

Varrell's prediction proved true. Bosworth disappeared suddenly and completely. His mother came a day or two later and spent a few hours in packing her son's goods, and a few minutes in a sad interview with the Principal. The boys who had lost money had it restored to them through Mr. Graham, and the thieving in the dormitories ceased.

The whereabouts of the wretched Bosworth remained for some time a mystery even to his mother. A year later, Vincent, who took his meals at Mrs. Bosworth's in Cambridge, reported having seen a letter postmarked "Texas" addressed to his landlady in handwriting which he thought he recognized. In his last college vacation Marks ran across Bosworth himself among a set of gamblers offering bets at the professional ball games in Chicago. It is safe to say that they did not renew their acquaintance.

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Eddy, relieved of the burden of his secret, convalesced rapidly, and was soon taken home by his father. Fortunately for the repentant lad, Mr. Eddy, himself an old Seatonian, had a frank talk with Mr. Graham before seeing his son, which deprived the dreaded meeting of half its terrors. It was a new idea to Mr. Eddy that a boy might be driven to continue in an evil way from which he wished to escape, through fear of the uncompromising harshness with which his confession would be received. The parting word of the Principal sent the father home somewhat comforted by the thought that there might yet be a chance for the boy to retrieve himself in the old school.

For Phil and Dick and Wrenn Varrell the last days of school were pleasantly uneventful. Dick had a peaceful fortnight in which to prepare his class-day oration, which he delivered with becoming gravity, as if it were a serious contribution to the wisdom of the world. Wrenn returned to the modest tenor of his life; and when Planter, in his class prophecy, predicted for Varrell a career which should rival that of Sherlock

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Holmes, hardly half a dozen fellows in the class understood the point of the reference. Phil went rejoicing home at the end of the school term, leaving his older friends to miss his cheerful presence. His study chair was more than filled by John Curtis, who settled himself in it as the most favorable place for "grinding"—a place which he left only to sleep and eat during the long week which preceded the college examinations.

John was rather subdued when the final goodbyes were said, and the fellows around him were promising one another a speedy and happy reunion at Cambridge or New Haven or Hanover or some other of the half-dozen places to which their choice of college called them. Melvin felt much concerned at the solemn look on the big fellow's face, and the artless subterfuges with which he sought to avoid committing himself as to his plans for the future.

But Curtis was merely cautious. On the Fourth of July, as Dick was condescendingly helping his "kid" brother in the serious task of setting off fireworks, a telegram was brought to

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him, dated at Mt. Desert, and bearing this simple legend :—

“ In clear except for Dutch. Meet you Soldiers’ Field,  
September.

“ JOHN CURTIS.”

Dick’s last half-dollar went for fireworks to  
celebrate the news.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION  
CHILDREN'S ROOM



















